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Édition de Luxe

Travels in Russia

Belgium and Holland

A Day in London

By

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TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

Introduction

THOUGH the Romanticists loved exoticism, they seldom, indeed rarely, took the trouble to visit foreign countries for themselves, being perfectly satisfied, after the fashion of Thomas Moore when he wrote "Lalla Rookh," to accept the accounts of strange climes and little known lands published by travellers whom the demon of change and novelty had driven thither. It is true that the father of Romanticism himself, the illustrious Chateaubriand, had been a great traveller, and that he had personally visited the places in which he laid the scene of his various tales and novels. Lamartine, also, had turned to account his early visit to Italy in the setting of "Graziella," but neither Musset nor Victor Hugo, to name only the greater names in the galaxy of brilliant writers that formed the school, had ever set foot in Venice or the East when they composed, the one his "Tales of Spain and Italy," the

other his superb "Orientales," so full of colour and dash.

Yet the Romanticist movement tended greatly to encourage travel and to lead the sedentary Frenchmen to issue from the boundaries of their country for the express purpose of making themselves acquainted with the scenery of other lands, the manners and customs of their inhabitants, and the character of their art and their literature. The desire to know foreign things, so industriously fostered by Mme. de Staël, — a desire that had already led many a one of her forerunners to visit England, that had led thither men of very different mind and purpose from her own, — grew constantly keener and more imperious. It may be said that with the triumph of Romanticism the love of travel was fairly implanted in the breasts of the French, though it was long before it took hold of the middle classes and led them also to seek the Swiss mountains and the Italian lakes.

But there were difficulties in the way of intending tourists in those days that might well daunt even bold spirits. The means of communication were neither as numerous nor as commodious as at the present time. The lumbering stage-coaches which travelled between

the chief centres were in no wise attractive, and a trip in one of these conveyances was something to be long remembered by those who had intrusted themselves to that mode of progression. The hotels and inns were very far indeed from approaching the better modern houses of entertainment, leaving out of consideration the palatial hotels that now abound in great cities and in all popular resorts. The post-chaise answered the needs of the wealthy, and many of the latter class usually travelled in carriages of their own, in which, of course, they secured the maximum of comfort attainable at the time. The roads, save where military necessities had compelled the construction of good highways, were rough and stony, and accidents due to these causes were frequent. Finally, the expense of travel was infinitely greater than at the present day, when one may so readily proceed from one part of Europe to the other for a very moderate sum.

Notwithstanding all these drawbacks, as most people would consider them, there were then, as now, determined spirits that let slip no opportunity of travelling out of France, and chief among them was Théophile Gautier. As he truly remarks in the present volume, the demon of unrest possessed him. He loved travel

for its own sake; the mere act of moving about and seeing new lands was a delight to him. It was travel itself that he enjoyed, for it was full of sensations each more satisfactory than the others. He was a good traveller, in the fullest meaning of the word, for he did not cavil at every difference in manners and customs, at every change of food and drink, at every discomfort that diminished the pleasure he had been expecting. He took things as they came, and provided the land or the town or the people furnished him with a fair amount of "local colour," he was entirely content.

This is especially evident in his account of his voyage in Russia. The country certainly lacked, when he first visited it, the peculiar charms that drew him so strongly to Spain and Italy and Greece. It had not, like these, a store of legendary lore with which every well educated and decently read European was familiar, and that lent to the land and its sites an additional and powerful interest. It was not highly civilised in the same way as the other countries he had already visited, and did not have the charm of an art and a literature in which he could find themes congenial to his highly artistic nature. It possessed, no doubt, treasures of art, but these were drawn from the older

lands, and were already well known to him through similar works. It had not a reputation for splendour of light, magic of colouring, or softness of climate, like the countries of the South. But it did have an indefinable attraction due to the very ignorance of the country which was characteristic of most Frenchmen, and indeed of most Englishmen at that time. Russia had been traversed, of course, and travellers had brought back accounts of the strange architecture, the unusual food, the quaint customs, and the novel dress of the inhabitants. It was, above all things, the land of snow and frost; the country of fierce and desolating winter storms; of sleigh journeys on which the venturesome traveller ran the risk of being devoured by hordes of famished wolves. There one might see the splendour of the long winter nights when the sun scarcely shows above the horizon, and of the endless summer days when the orb of day disappears but for the briefest of moments, mingling, as Gautier puts it, its setting and its rising.

It was thus an altogether new series of aspects and effects that he was called upon to describe, but he achieved as brilliant a success in this case as he had in that of Spain, Italy, and Constantinople. To

many of his admirers the "Travels in Russia" are his masterpiece in that particular line of work, though it is difficult to pronounce between the conflicting claims of the several volumes. It is certain, at least, that his powers are here seen at their best, and that he has fully come up to the expectations his friends had formed. Dealing with an entirely novel series of effects, for which it might have been thought that neither his palette nor his vocabulary, one and the same thing in his case, were prepared, he has done the fullest justice to the peculiarities of the Northern clime, into which he entered then for the first time. No one who has known the winters of Canada or of the West can fail to be struck with the admirable manner in which Gautier has rendered the peculiar aspects of nature in the North, and at a season in which it wears so different a look from that it has in more temperate climes. The effect of the vast snow-covered landscapes, the beauty of the starlit, cold winter nights, the charms of the sports characteristic of the season, the sensations awakened in one by the totally different look of the country, these he has reproduced to perfection. One feels the Northern winter again on reading these pages; the melancholy it inspires again fills the breast, and it

needs but scant exercise of the imagination to fancy one's self back in days of blizzard or of the still cold that kills man and beast.

Then he has so wonderfully seized upon the characteristic traits of the land and the people; he has well impressed on his reader the feeling of strangeness awakened by contact with this semi-barbarous civilisation; he makes one enter into the outer life of the inhabitants, for he himself makes no claim to inform us of their inner life or to study their psychology — indeed, psychology, as every one knows, was the last thing thought of by the Romanticist school of writers. He does thoroughly, however, impart to us the feeling that we are in Russia, and he notes just those small differences that nowadays are almost all that is left of the distinctions between one country and another.

An artist above and beyond all, he seizes on whatever is picturesque and beautiful. His description of the home-coming, at fall of night, of the crows and ravens that inhabit the many towers and belfries of the Kremlin at Moscow, is a most beautiful and poetic piece of work. His account of the light effects upon the cathedral of Saint Isaac's in Saint Petersburg, is a marvellous example of word-painting. It is more than suggestive, which,

after all, is about all that one can ask of word-painting; it makes the effects visible in themselves. He observes far more accurately and closely than would be supposed by most persons acquainted with the rough and ready rashness of the average Romanticists, when it is a question of producing a new sensation or obtaining a startling contrast. His notes on the colour of the snow and of the shadows which it forms have nothing very wonderful about them, it may be, and these things are familiar enough to any one with eyes who has lived in a cold country, but they prove at least that Gautier did not allow preconceived notions to interfere with his observations. His description of the trip down the Volga has a charm and an ease that do not at first strike the reader. It takes a little thinking to note all the delicacy with which the expressions have been chosen and the effects translated into writing. There are verses of Browning's that recur to the memory on reading certain passages in this portion of the book.

Few, if any writers, have such a capacity for reproducing and conveying the aspect of a town or a city to a reader who has never visited the place. In this volume the accounts of Moscow and Saint Petersburg of course suggest themselves at once as instances, but even more

interesting, from this point of view, are the descriptions of Lubeck, Berlin, Hamburg, and of the smaller Russian towns in which Gautier spent but a few days, or it may be but an hour or two. He seizes at once upon the characteristic features and so emphasises them that, just as he recognised Hamburg from Heinrich Heine's satirical description, so could one who had never been in Lubeck recognise at a glance the streets and houses Gautier tells of.

Artist he always was, and the artist in him quickly responds to whatever of beauty appears to him. His account of the Bohemian concert in Rybinsk is simply superb. Rarely, if ever, has the peculiar power of music to suggest and bind as with a spell been so graphically and admirably described. Gautier was not a musician, of course, in the technical sense of the word, but he felt music, and understood it as an expression of certain feelings that can in no other way be revealed. It is this that he has brought out so strikingly in the passage referred to, and it is but an additional proof of his largeness of mind and of his intense love of the beautiful. Even Byzantine art, with its stiff, archaic forms and its dull colours, purely conventional and unlike nature, finds favour in his eyes as expressing certain ideas

that deserve respect. He, the enthusiastic admirer of Tintoretto, Velasquez, Veronese, Rembrandt, Correggio, Rubens, can nevertheless find satisfaction and beauty in the contemplation of the ikons turned out by the monks of the Greek Church, and his account of his visit to the painters' studio in the Troïtza convent is not one of the least attractive parts of his book.

Gautier had some prejudices — should we like him as much had he been wholly free from them? One of these is that civilisation is, if not destructive of art, at least hurtful to it. Of course he was largely influenced in this view by the teaching of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which had taken so deep a hold on the younger generations of France. If he does not follow the lead of the misanthropic Genevese to the extent of seeking to separate himself wholly from society, he does indulge in constant flings at civilisation and its effects. This can well be borne with in view of the fact that Gautier, at bottom, was one who most thoroughly appreciated the finest results of civilisation in the field of art. He lived at a time when literary and art doctrines were still the cause of violent contentions and led to fights exceedingly bitter in their origins and developments. He had not quite got rid of, he never did quite get rid of, the old

enthusiasm that hurried him to the Théâtre-Français to lead the cheering on the occasion of the first performance of "Hernani." He still was the old war-horse of the tumultuous days of 1830, and he had to have his fling to the last at some of the doctrines that had then called down upon their supporters the obloquy of the young school. But these flings became rarer, and "Russia" is tolerably free from diatribes such as occur in some of the earlier works.

From this point of view, and also as an example and a contrast, the pages in which Gautier describes his first trips abroad will prove of the greatest interest. Belgium, Holland, and England were visited by him before he started on that memorable voyage to Spain in which he found his true environment. The accounts of these earlier trips exhibit a buoyancy of spirits and a recklessness of expression that are occasionally startling, but they are precious as documents belonging to an earlier artistic stage of the writer's evolution. They lack the beauty and finish of the later works, but the germs of the powers Gautier was to give such conclusive proofs of are to be found in them.

The "Travels in Russia" appeared first in the columns of the *Moniteur universel*, in October, 1858,

and continued to come out in instalments until the beginning of December, 1861. Several chapters, and these among the most important, such as "Moscow," "Troïtza," "Byzantine Art," etc., were first published in the *Revue nationale et étrangère*, between the months of December, 1864, and October, 1866. The lengthy description of Saint Isaac's was to form part of the notable work referred to by the author in the opening paragraphs of the second part of his Travels: the "Treasures of Art of Ancient and Modern Russia." This was to have appeared in separate parts; five did appear, but the publication was then suspended, to Gautier's infinite regret, for he had taken much pains in the preparation of the matter. It is this fact that explains what at first sight appears to be a curious, nay, a startling omission: there is not a word about the splendid collection of paintings in the Hermitage at Saint Petersburg in the "Travels."

The collected chapters were subsequently brought out together in book form in November, 1866, under the title they at present bear.

Travels in Russia

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

PART I—WINTER IN RUSSIA

BERLIN

ONE of the greatest pleasures of travel is the first walk through a city yet unknown, which dispels or realises the picture one had formed of it. Differences in forms, characteristic peculiarities, architectural idioms strike the eye still unaccustomed to them, and perceiving them then most clearly.

My ideas of Berlin were drawn in great part from Hoffmann's fantastic Tales. In spite of myself, a strange and queer Berlin, peopled with Aulic councillors, Kreislers, archivists like Lindhurst, and students like Anselmo, had grown within my brain in a fog of tobacco smoke; and now I beheld a regularly laid out city of grandiose aspect, with broad streets, wide promenades, handsome buildings, in a style half Eng-

lish, half German, bearing the mark of the most recent fashion.

As I walked, I glanced within the cellars, reached by polished, slippery steps, — so well soaped that you tumbled into them as into an ant-eater's hole, — wondering whether I might not discover Hoffmann himself sitting on a barrel, his feet crossed over the bowl of his giant pipe, in the midst of a comical swarm of beings, as he is represented in the illustration to Loewe-Weymar's translation of his Tales; but as a matter of fact, nothing of the sort existed in these underground shops, which their owners were beginning to open. The cats, most benevolent-looking, did not roll phosphorescent eyes like Murr, and seemed incapable of writing their memoirs, or of making out with their claws a score of Richard Wagner's.

Berlin, indeed, is anything but fantastic, and it took the mad poetic imagination of the story-teller to lodge phantoms in so bright, so straight, so correct a city, in which the bats of hallucination cannot find a single dark corner in which to cling with their claws. The handsome monumental houses, which, with their pillars, their fronts, their architraves, might easily be

taken for palaces, are generally built of brick, stone seeming to be scarce in Berlin. But the brick is covered with cement or plaster, painted to imitate dressed stone. Sham joints indicate fictitious courses, and the illusion would be complete, but that here and there the winter frosts have peeled off the cement and allowed the red tone of the bricks to show through. The necessity of painting the façades all over in order to conceal the nature of the material of which they are constructed, gives them the aspect of great architectural stage-settings seen by daylight. The salient parts, the mouldings, cornices, entablatures, and brackets, are of wood, of copper, or of tin, shaped as required. When not examined too closely, the effect is satisfactory. All this splendour lacks but one thing, and that is genuineness.

The mansions that border Regent's Park in London also have painted porticos and pillars with brick centres and plaster flutings, that attempt to palm themselves off for stone and marble. It would be much better to build plainly of brick, the warm tones and the ingenious contrasts in the laying furnishing so many resources. I have seen in Berlin itself charming houses built in this way, which had to the eye the

great advantage of being true. Sham is always more or less unpleasant.

The Hôtel de Russie, at which I put up, is admirably situated, and I shall describe the prospect seen from the entrance steps, as it gives a very fair idea of the general aspect of Berlin.

In the foreground is a quay bordering on the Spree. A few boats with lofty masts are cradled on the brown waters. Boats on a canal or a stream within a city have always a charming effect. On the quay on the other side rises a row of houses, some of the older ones of which have preserved their peculiar character. The Royal Palace is at one corner; a dome resting upon an octagonal tower shows its monumental contour above the roofs. The flat walls and angles give grace to the roundness of the dome itself.

A bridge — the centre of which opens to allow of the passage of vessels — spans the river, its white marble groups recalling the bridge of St. Angelo at Rome. These groups, eight in number if my memory serves me, consist each of two figures, the one allegorical, winged, representing the Fatherland, or Glory; the other real, representing a youth guided through many trials to triumphant immortality. These groups, which

are in classical taste, and in the style of Bridan or of Cartellier, are not lacking in merit, and many portions of the anatomy are well studied out. The pedestals are ornamented with medallions, on which the Prussian eagle, half realistic, half heraldic, is cleverly brought in. The decoration is rather too rich, in my opinion, for the simplicity of the bridge.

Farther on, through the trees of a promenade, or a public garden, is seen the Old Museum, a great building in the Greek style, with Doric columns standing out against a background of paintings. At the corners of the roof stand out against the sky, bronze horses, held in by equerries. At the back is seen the triangular pediment of the New Museum, while a church, imitated from the Pantheon of Agrippa, fills the space at the right, the whole forming a fairly grandiose prospect worthy of a capital city.

On crossing the bridge, one catches sight of the grimy façade of the palace, before which extends a terrace with a balustrade. The sculptures on the grand entrance are in the old German rococo taste, exaggerated, rich, luxuriant, eccentric, that contorts ornaments like heraldic lambrequins, and which I had already admired on the Dresden Palace. That man-

nered eccentricity has a charm of its own, and is not unpleasant to eyes wearied by masterpieces, as mine are. It is marked by inventiveness, capriciousness, and originality, and at the risk of being charged with bad taste, I own that I prefer such exuberance to the Greek style imitated with more erudition than skill in modern monuments. On the other side of the gate prance great bronze horses in the style of Monte Cavallo's, their bridles held by nude equerries.

I visited the apartments in the palace. They are handsome and rich, but of no interest to the artist save as regards their old ceilings, which are curiously wrought out and carved, filled with cupids, foliage, and rock-work in the queerest taste possible. In the concert-room there is a gallery for the musicians, covered with the quaintest carvings, all silvered over, which is exquisitely effective. Silver is not employed enough in decoration ; it rests the eye after the classic gold, and lends itself to other combinations of colours. The chapel, the dome of which rises above the Palace, must certainly satisfy Protestants, for it is bright, well arranged, comfortable, and decorated in rational fashion ; it fails, however, to impress any one who has visited the Catholic churches of Spain, Italy, France, and Belgium. I was surprised

at one thing,—the portraits of Melanchthon and Theodore de Bèze painted upon a gold background; and yet it was quite natural that they should be so.

Let us cross the square and take a turn through the Museum, admiring on our way a vast porphyry basin, resting upon cubes of the same stone, in front of the steps that lead up to the portico, decorated with paintings by various artists, under the direction of the celebrated Pieter von Cornelius.

These paintings form a broad frieze, which is broken in the centre by the entrance to the Museum, and each end of which turns back along the side wall of the portico. The left portion exhibits a whole poem of mythological cosmogony, treated with the philosophy and science which Germans apply to such compositions. The right portion, purely anthropological, represents the birth, development, and evolution of mankind.

If I were to describe in detail these two vast frescoes, my reader would unquestionably be delighted with the ingenious inventiveness, the deep erudition, the sagacity, and the critical powers of the artist. It would form a work worthy of Kreuzer's symbolics — the mysteries of the ancient origins are revealed, and science states its

latest discovery. Or if I showed you them in those beautiful German engravings, with the outlines set off by light shadows, engraved sharply and accurately like Albert Dürer's work, and of a pallor agreeable to the eye, my reader would admire the ordering of the composition, balanced so artistically, the happy combination of the groups, the ingenious episodes, the careful choice of attributes, the significance of each detail. He might even note grandeur in style, a masterly turn, fine draperies, proud ports, characteristic types, boldness of muscular drawing, recalling Michael Angelo, and a certain piquant German savour. He would be struck by the familiarity with great things, the vast conception, the development of the idea, which our French painters ordinarily lack, and he would have almost the same opinion of Cornelius as the Germans. But in the presence of the work itself, the impression made is a very different one. As is well known, fresco-painting, even in the hands of the Italian masters, who are so well versed in the technique of their art, has not the attractiveness of oil-painting. The eye needs to become accustomed to the abrupt, mat tones before it can make out their true beauty. Many people who do not say so — for it is very rare to find any one who has the courage of his feel-

ings or of his belief — think the frescoes in the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel hideous. It is only the great names of Michael Angelo and Raphael that make them keep silence, and they murmur empty formulæ of enthusiasm, before going into genuine ecstasy in the presence of a "Magdalen" by Guido or a "Madonna" by Carlo Dolci. I therefore make much allowance for the unpleasant aspect of frescoes. But in this case, the execution is assuredly far too repellent. If the mind is satisfied, the eye suffers. Painting, which is a purely plastic art, can render its ideal only through form and colour. It is not enough to think, one must do. The finest intention needs to be expressed by a skilled brush, and if in vast compositions of this kind, I am willing to admit that details should be simplified and illusions should be left aside, that the colour should be neutral, abstract, and, so to speak, theoretical, I think also we should be spared the harsh, disagreeable, loud tones, the sharp discords, the lack of skill, the ugliness and heaviness of touch. Great as must be the respect paid to the thought, the first quality of painting is to be painting, and it must be allowed that such material execution as this is like a veil placed between the spectator and the artist's conception.

I shall not make an inventory of the Berlin Museum, which is rich in pictures and statues of the great masters. The glories of royal galleries are more or less well represented in it. The most remarkable thing is the very full and very complete collection of early masters of all countries and of all schools, from the Byzantines to the artists who flourished immediately before the Renaissance; the early German school, so little known in France, and so interesting in many respects, can be studied here better probably than anywhere else.

The staircase of the New Museum is decorated with Kaulbach's remarkable frescoes, which engravings and the Universal Exhibition have made so familiar in France. Every one remembers the cartoon of "The Dispersion of Mankind," and everybody went to see the poetic "Defeat of the Huns," in which the battle begun between the living is continued by the souls above the battle-field, strewn with dead bodies. "The Destruction of Jerusalem" is well composed, though somewhat too theatrical. It is much like a tableau at the end of the fifth act, and does not quite harmonise with the serious character of fresco-painting. Homer is the central figure in a panel that represents Hellenic civilisation, and this composition seems to me the least

good of the series. Other paintings, yet incomplete represent the climacteric epochs of humanity. The last will be almost contemporary, for when a German starts out to paint, he is bound to take in the whole of universal history. The great Italian masters did not need so much to turn out masterpieces; but every civilisation has its own tendencies, and this encyclopædic style of painting is characteristic of the times. It looks as if, before starting out in pursuit of new destinies, the world felt it necessary to synthesise its past.

These compositions are separated by arabesques, emblems, and allegorical figures relating to the subject, and they are surmounted by a grisaille frieze full of ingenious and charming motives.

Kaulbach seeks colour, and if he does not always manage to find it, he at least avoids over-unpleasant discords. He indulges over-much in reflections, glazings and splash lights, and his frescoes occasionally recall the paintings of Hayez or of Théophile Fragonard. He uses a medley of tones where a broad local tint would suffice. He breaks open, with inopportune vigour, the wall which he ought simply to cover over; for fresco is a sort of tapestry, and it should not break in upon the architectural lines by any depths of per-

spective. On the whole, Kaulbach cares more for the technical side of his art than pure thinkers, and his painting, though humanitarian, is yet human.

The stairs, of colossal size, are adorned with casts of the finest statues of antiquity. In the walls are placed the Metopes of the Parthenon, the friezes of the Temple of Theseus, and on one of the landings rises the Pandrosion, with its caryatids, so powerfully and calmly beautiful. The whole effect is rather grandiose.

"But what about the inhabitants?" my reader will say. "So far you have spoken only of houses, paintings, and statues. Yet Berlin is not a deserted city." Unquestionably not, but I spent one day only in Berlin, and not knowing German, I could not make any very deep ethnographical studies. Nowadays there is no visible difference between one nation and another. All have adopted the uniform domino of civilisation. No peculiar colour, no peculiar cut of the dress informs you that you are in a different country. The Berliners whom I met in the street or on the promenades cannot be described; and those who wandered Unter den Linden were exactly like those who wander up and down the Boulevard des Italiens. The Unter den

Linden, which is bordered by magnificent hotels, is planted, as the name indicates, with lime trees, the leaf of which is heart-shaped, a peculiarity, as Heinrich Heine remarks, which has won it favour in the eyes of lovers, and makes it a favourite rendezvous. At the entrance rises the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great, the reduced model of which figured at the Universal Exhibition.

Like the Champs-Élysées in Paris, the promenade is closed by a triumphal arch, surmounted by a car drawn by four bronze horses. Beyond the triumphal arch lies a park, which corresponds fairly well to our Bois de Boulogne.

On the edges of this park, shaded by great trees, which have all the intense green of Northern vegetation, and are refreshed by a meandering stream, open gardens full of flowers, at the back of which are perceived houses of pleasaunce and summer-homes. They are neither chalets, nor cottages, nor villas, but Pompeian houses, with tetrastyles, porticos, and panels of *rosso antico*. The Greek taste is in much honour in Berlin. On the other hand the Renaissance style, so fashionable in Paris, appears to be held in contempt, for I saw no building of that kind.

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

HAMBURG

THE Hôtel de l'Europe, where I have put up, is situated on the Alster Quay. The Alster is a basin quite as large as the Lake of Enghien, and, like the latter, is full of tame swans. On three sides it is bordered by hotels and splendid residences in the modern taste. A dam planted with trees and topped by a pumping station, forms the fourth side; beyond stretches a vast lagoon. On the most frequented quay, a café, painted green, and built on piles, extends into the water, like that café on the Golden Horn at Constantinople, where I have smoked so many a chibouque while watching the sea-birds sweeping round.

At the sight of the quay, the basin, the houses, I experienced a curious sensation. It seemed to me that I had seen them before. A vague reminiscence came back to my mind, and I wondered whether I had ever come to Hamburg without knowing it. Unquestionably none of these things were new to me; and yet I

saw them for the first time. Could I possibly have preserved the memory of some painting or photograph? No, it was not that.

While I was seeking for the philosophical explanation of this remembrance of the unseen, the name of Heinrich Heine suddenly occurred to me, and then I understood. The great poet had often talked to me about Hamburg, in that plastic language the secret of which he possessed, and which was equivalent to the reality. In the "Reisebilder" he has described the café, the basin, the swans, and also the Hamburg citizens walking about; and pretty portraits he has made of them! He speaks of it again in his poem "Germania," and his description is so vivid, so strong, so accurate, that the actual sight of the place cannot teach you any more about it.

I went round the basin, gracefully accompanied by a snow-white swan, so handsome that I might have believed that Jupiter proposed to seduce some Hamburg Leda, and by way of disguising himself more completely, pretended to snap at the bits of bread I threw him.

At the end of the basin on the right is a sort of public garden or promenade, with an artificial hill, like

the Labyrinth in the Botanical Garden in Paris. Having visited the garden, I retraced my steps.

In every city there is a fine quarter, a new quarter, a rich, a fashionable quarter, the inhabitants of which are haughty, and to which guides conduct you proudly. The streets are broad and straight, and cut each other at right angles; they are bordered by broad pavements of granite, brick, or asphalt; gas lamps are everywhere; the houses look like hotels or palaces; the classically modern architecture, the clean paint, the varnished doors and polished brasses delight the municipality and the leaders of progress. It is all clean, correct, healthy, full of light and air, and recalls Paris or London. There is the Exchange; it is superb; it is as handsome as that in Paris! Well, I grant all that; and besides, one can smoke in it, which is an advantage. Farther on are the Law Courts, the Bank, etc., etc., built in the style that my reader knows of, which is adored by the Philistines of every country. But these things are not what an artist looks for. Undoubtedly that mansion must have cost a great deal; it combines all possible luxury and comfort; it is evident that the inhabitant of that shell is a millionaire; yet I must be permitted to prefer the old house with over-

hanging stories, roof of irregular tiles, and small characteristic details that reveal the life of previous generations. To be interesting, a city must look as if it had lived; man must have in some sort given it a soul. What makes these splendid streets, built yesterday, so cold and dull is that they are not yet impregnated with human vitality.

Leaving the new quarter, I penetrated little by little the labyrinth of the old streets, and I was soon in the presence of the picturesque, the characteristic Hamburg, a true old city, with its mediæval aspect, that would charm Bonnington, Isabey, and William Wyld.

I have seldom enjoyed a walk more; I went slowly, stopping at every street corner, so as not to lose a single detail. The gables of the houses were denticulated, or turned with volutes, like mouldings. The projecting stories, overhanging one another, were composed of a row of windows, or rather of a single window with glass panes separated by carved jambs. At the foot of the houses were cellars and underground rooms, which the stairs leading to the door spanned like drawbridges. Wood, brick, timber-work, stone, slate, mixed in a way to satisfy lovers of colour, filled

up the small portion of the façades left free by the windows. The roofs were of red or violet tiles, very steep, and broken by dormer windows. These high-pitched roofs look very well against the Northern skies; the rain runs down them, the snow does not lie on them. They are in harmony with the climate, and they do not need to be swept in winter.

It was a Saturday, and Hamburg was making its toilet. Servant-maids perched on high were cleaning the windows; the sashes, opening outwards, projected on either side of the street. A light golden sun-mist gave a soft, misty warmth to the perspective, and the light flashed through the windows, each set out at right angles to the houses seen in profile. It is difficult to imagine the rich, precious, strange tones which the panes, placed one behind another, acquired from the sunbeams that shot obliquely from the end of the street. The windows of mysterious interiors, with green bubbled panes, in which Rembrandt loves to place his alchemists, have no warmer, more transparent, or more splendid tones under their glacis of bitumen. Of course, when the windows are closed this peculiar effect vanishes, but there are left the signs and notices, each attracting the attention of the wayfarer by their

symbols or their letters, that jut out from the wall and invade the public street.

No doubt proper municipal ordinances would prevent all these projections beyond the street line; but they break the lines, please the eye, and vary the prospect by unexpected angles. Sometimes it is a sign in coloured glass, in which the sun sets rubies, topazes, and emeralds, and which marks an optician's or a confectioner's shop; sometimes, suspended from a great ornamented iron bracket, a lion holding a compass in one paw and a mallet in the other, the emblem of the coopers' guild; or again, a barber's brass dishes, shining so brightly that by their side the famed helmet of Mambrinus would appear verdigrised; boards on which are painted oysters, cray-fish, herrings, soles, and other fish, indicating a fishmonger, — and so on.

The doors of some of the houses are ornamented with rustic pillars, with vermiculated boss-work, deep-cut pediments, blowsy caryatids, little angels, small Cupids, huge foliage, and heavy rock-work, the whole washed over with paint, no doubt renewed every year.

It is impossible to count up the tobacco-shops in Hamburg. Every two or three steps one comes across

a negro, bare to the belt, and cultivating the precious leaf, or a Sultan wearing the costume of a carnival Turk, and smoking a colossal pipe. Boxes of cigars, with their vignettes and more or less fallacious inscriptions, arranged somewhat symmetrically, formed the motives of the ornamentation of the show-windows. There must have been very little tobacco left in Havana, if those show-windows, so rich in famous brands, were to be believed.

It was early. The servant-maids, kneeling on the steps or standing upon the window-sills, were busily occupied with the Saturday weekly cleaning. In spite of the pretty sharp air, they exhibited robust arms bare to the shoulder, tanned, reddened, and marked with that vermilion which so often surprises one in Rubens's paintings, and which is due to the action of cold, wind, and water upon the fair skin. Little girls, belonging to the lower middle-class, bare-headed, low-necked, and bare-armed, were starting out to go to market. I shivered in my overcoat at seeing them so thinly dressed. It is curious that Northern women cut their dresses low and go about with bare arms and bare heads, while in the South women load themselves down with jackets, haicks, pelisses, and warm garments.

HAMBURG

By way of filling up the measure of my joy, costume, which the traveller is obliged nowadays to seek for at great distances, and occasionally in vain, turned up artlessly before me in the streets of Hamburg, in the person of milkmaids, not unlike the Tyrolean water-girls of Venice. The milkmaids' costume consists of a skirt fitting closely on the hips and pleated with very small pleats, basted together so as to flare out below the hips only, and of a jacket of green, black, or blue cloth, buttoned at the wrists. Sometimes the skirt is striped perpendicularly, sometimes it has a broad diagonal band of cloth or velvet. Blue stockings, which the fairly short skirt allows to be seen, and wooden-soled galoshes, complete the rather characteristic dress. The head-dress especially is peculiar. On the hair, fastened at the back with a knot of ribbon like a great black butterfly, is placed a straw hat in the shape of an over-set soup plate, with the bottom cut out so that the wearer can place on her head a pitcher or other burden.

Most of the milkmaids are young, and their costume makes almost all of them seem pretty. They carry the milk in a rather unusual manner. A yoke, painted a bright red, cut out to fit round the neck, and hol-

lowed underneath to fit on to the shoulders, supports two pails, also bright red, which balance on either side of the girl, as she walks upright and with elastic step under her double burden. There is no better orthopædia than this fashion of carrying weights. These milkmaids have wonderful surefootedness, ease, and style.

Wandering on as fancy led me, I reached the maritime portion of the city, where canals take the place of streets. The tide was still low, and the vessels lay stranded on the mud, showing their hulls, and leaning over in poses that would have delighted a water-colour painter. Presently the tide rose, and everything began to move. I suggest that artists who desire to imitate Canaletto, Guardi, and Joyant, should go to Hamburg. They will find there endless motives as picturesque and more novel than those which they go to Venice for.

This forest of salmon-coloured masts, with their tracery of rigging and their tanned sails drying in the sun, the tarred hulls with apple-green bulwarks and yards, the spars sticking into the windows, the cranes covered with a roof of boards, curved like that of a portico, the derricks, taking hold of the goods on the decks and

depositing them in the houses, the drawbridges opening to allow vessels to pass, the clumps of trees, the gables surmounted here and there by steeples of church domes, all bathed in smoke, illumined by sunbeams, sparkling with spangles, with vaporous blue distances brought out by vigorous evergreens, — produced effects most savoury and fecund in their novelty. A copper-roofed steeple, rising over this maze of spars and houses, reminded me by its curious green tint of the Tower of Galata at Constantinople.

Let me note at haphazard a few peculiarities. The carts consist of a board and two open sides that flare out, and are driven *à la* Daumont. When drawn by two horses, the booted driver rides one of the animals, instead of walking by its side, as is the case with us. When the cart has but one horse, the driver drives standing. The narrowness of the streets, the necessity of waiting until the drawbridges, opened for the passage of vessels, are closed again, cause numerous blocks, which, thanks to the phlegm of both bipeds and quadrupeds, are never dangerous. The postmen, wearing long red coats of antique cut, attract the stranger by their eccentric aspect. Rare indeed is it to see red in our modern civilisation, which loves neutral tints, and

whose ideal seems to be to make the painter's profession impossible !

In the market green vegetables and green fruits prevailed. As has been truly said, baked apples are the only ripe fruit to be had in cold countries. On the other hand, flowers abounded. There were barrelfuls, basketfuls of them there, fresh, brilliant, and perfumed. Among the peasants who were selling these various things, I noticed some who wore round jackets and short breeches. They came, as well as the market girls, from one of the islands in the Elbe, where old customs are preserved, and the inhabitants marry strictly among themselves.

Near the market I saw a flesh-coloured omnibus, which travels between Hamburg and Altona and back. It is built differently from our own. The front is a sort of coupé provided with a glass window which can be lowered, protecting the travellers from wind and rain without depriving them of the view. The main body of the coach, pierced with windows has two side-benches, and at the back, the prolongation of the sides and of the roof shelters the conductor, and allows the passengers to get in or out under shelter. "What is the use of these remarks?" I hear my reader say.

"Why do you not tell us rather the tonnage of the port, the year in which Hamburg was founded, the number of inhabitants it contains?" But I know nothing of these things, and any guidebook will give you that information. On the other hand, but for me you would forever have remained unaware that flesh-coloured omnibuses exist in this good Hanseatic town.

While traversing the streets, I was much preoccupied by the fact that Rabelais often speaks of the caviare and the smoked beef of Hamburg, which he praises as excellent stimulants to drink, and I expected to see whole heaps of them in the meat shops. But there is no more Hamburg smoked beef in Hamburg than Brussels sprouts in Brussels, Parmesan cheese in Parma, or Ostend oysters at Ostend. Perchance it might be obtained at Wilken's, the local Véry, where one can get bird's-nests soup, mock turtle, — not made with calves' heads,— Indian curry, elephants' feet, bears' hams, bisons' humps, Volga sturgeons, Chinese ginger, rose preserves, and other cosmopolitan dainties.

One good thing about seaports is that nothing surprises one there. It is the proper place for eccentrics to live in, — but then, eccentrics love to be noticed.

As the day grew on, the crowd became larger. Women were in the majority. They appear to enjoy great liberty in Hamburg. Quite young girls go and come alone, without any notice being taken of them, and what is remarkable is that the children go to school alone, their little basket on their arm, and their slate in their hand. If they were allowed to do that with us they would go and play.

Dogs are muzzled in Hamburg the week through except Sunday, when they can bite whom they please. They are taxed, and seem to be highly thought of. But the cats look sad and misunderstood. Recognising a friend in me, they cast melancholy glances upon me, and said in their feline language, which I have acquired through long practice: "These Philistines, busy making money, despise us; and yet our eyes are yellow as gold. These fellows think that we are only fit to catch rats, we who are sages, dreamers, we who are independent, who spin our mysterious wheel while we sleep on the prophet's sleeve. You may pass your hand over our backs, full of electric sparks, and tell Charles Baudelaire to bewail our griefs in a beautiful sonnet."

SCHLESVIG

THE town of Altona, whither repairs the flesh-coloured omnibus I have described, begins with a vast street with broad sidewalks, bordered with small theatres and side-shows, recalling the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, a queer remembrance on the frontier of the estates of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. It is true, though, that Hamlet liked players, and gave them advice just like modern newspaper men.

At the other end of Altona stands the station of the railway that leads to Schlesvig, whither I was bound. I had promised, if ever I passed through Denmark, to pay a visit to a beautiful lady, a friend of mine, and it was at Schlesvig that I was to ascertain how to reach L . . . , which is only a few hours' drive from it.

So I got into a carriage, somewhat as an off chance, for I had much difficulty in making the ticket-seller understand where I wanted to go, — German here being complicated by Danish. Fortunately, my travelling

companions, very well-bred young fellows, came to my assistance with a Germanic French very much like that Balzac uses in the "Comédie Humaine," when he makes Schmucke and Baron de Nucingen speak, but which, nevertheless, sounded like delightful music to my ears. They were kind enough to serve me as dragomans. When a man is in a foreign country, reduced to the condition of a deaf-mute, he cannot help cursing the author of the Tower of Babel, whose pride brought about the confusion of tongues. But seriously, nowadays, when mankind circles like generous blood by the arterial, venal, and capillary net-work of railways through every region of the globe, there should be held a congress of nations to decide upon the adoption of a common language, French or English, which, like Latin in the Middle Ages, should become the general and universal speech, the human tongue, so to speak. It would have to be learned by everybody in every school and college. Of course, each nation would preserve its own peculiar mother-tongue.

Night comes on quickly after these short autumn days, which are shorter here than in Paris, and the landscape, which is very flat, soon disappears in the vague penumbra that changes the form and character of objects. At

Schlesvig the railway, which is to be prolonged by-and-by, goes just beyond the station and stops in the middle of a field, like the last line of a letter, abruptly interrupted. The effect is singular.

An omnibus secured me and my trunks, and believing that it must of necessity take me somewhere, I allowed myself to be carried away trustfully. That intelligent omnibus deposited me in front of the best hotel in town, and there, as travellers' journals say, I "had speech with the natives." Among them there was a waiter who spoke French in a sufficiently transparent fashion to enable me to get a glimpse of what he meant, and who, which is much more rare, sometimes understood enough of what I said to him.

The writing of my name upon the register was like a flash of light, for the hostess had been informed of my arrival, and I was to be called for as soon as news of my coming had been received. As it was late, I waited until the next morning.

The messenger sent off that night returned rather late the next day, the distance from Schlesvig to L . . . being twenty-seven miles, or fifty-four there and back. The news he brought was rather contradictory. The lady of the castle was at Kiel, or Eckern-

foerde, or else in Hamburg, or mayhap in England; but as I had not come to Denmark merely to leave a card with the words, "I shall not call again," I sent off three telegrams to the three different places, and while awaiting a reply strolled through Schlesvig, which has quite a peculiar aspect.

The city extends on either side of a main thoroughfare, into which side-streets run like the bones into the backbone of a fish. It is on this street that stand the fine modern houses; but as usual they have nothing characteristic. On the other hand, the more modest dwellings have quite a local character. They consist of a very low ground-floor, not more than seven or eight feet high, over which spreads a great roof of fluted red tiles. Broad windows fill up the whole façade. Behind the windows bloom in pots of porcelain, crockery, or varnished earthenware, all manner of flowers: geraniums, verbenas, fuschias, cacti. There is no exception to the rule; the poorest house blooms like its neighbours. Behind this sort of perfumed screen, the women sit knitting or sewing, and glancing into the outside mirror, which reflects the few passers-by whose steps resound on the pavement. The cultivation of flowers is one of the passions of the people of the North. In

countries where flowers grow naturally no one cares for them.

The church had a surprise in store for me. Protestant churches are generally very uninteresting from an artistic point of view, unless the reformed religion has installed itself in a Catholic sanctuary diverted from its original use. Usually there is nothing to be seen but whitewashed naves and walls without any paintings or *bassi-relievi*, and long rows of shining oaken benches. They are clean and comfortable, but they are not handsome. The church at Schlesvig, however, contains a masterpiece by a great unknown artist, a triptych and altarpiece of carved wood, representing in a series of *bassi-relievi*, separated by delicate architectural work, the various scenes of the Passion. The artist, who is worthy of being placed with Michel Colombe, Pieter Visscher, Montanez, Cornejo Duque, Berruguete, Verbrugger, and other masters of carving, is called Bruggmann, a name which is not often mentioned, though it deserves to be. By the way, has my reader ever noticed how very much less known than painters are sculptors, whose talent is equal or even superior to that of their brethren of the brush? Their bulkier work, which forms part of monuments, cannot be displaced,

and does not become an object of trade. Besides, its severe beauty, lacking the seductiveness of colour, does not attract the attention of the multitude.

Around the church there are funeral chapels, very fancifully funereal, and handsomely decorated. A vaulted room contains the tombs of the former dukes of Schlesvig; they are massive stones covered with coats of arms and inscriptions in a fairly good style.

Around Schlesvig stretch vast salt-marshes, which communicate with the sea. I walked along the causeway, observing the play of light and the shimmering of the gray waters when acted upon by the wind. Sometimes I went as far as the castle, transformed into a barracks, and to the Public Garden, a sort of miniature Saint-Cloud adorned with a staircase cascade, with dolphins and other aquatic monsters, that jet forth no liquid. What a sinecure is the office of Triton in a basin in the style of Louis XIV! I should be glad to have as good a one.

Tired of awaiting replies that did not come, and having exhausted the attractions of Schlesvig, I ordered a post-chaise and started for L. . . . The drive was long. On either side I saw great sheets of water and lagoons. The road was bordered by mountain ash, the bright

red berries of which delighted my eye with their fiery tones, made more brilliant by the rays of the setting sun. Very pretty indeed was this avenue of trees, with its crimson umbellæ, looking like a coral avenue leading to the shell palace of an Undine. Birch trees, ash trees and pines followed the mountain ash, and I reached the post-house, where we did not change horses, but where those I had were fed, while I was drinking a glass of beer and smoking a cigar in the low-ceiled room with broad, low windows, in which servants stood by postilions who puffed tobacco smoke out of their porcelain pipes, in attitudes and with effects of light that would have inspired Ostade or Meissonnier.

Meanwhile twilight had come on, then night, if a superb moonlight can be called night. The road, longer than I had at first supposed, seemed still longer on account of my desire to get to my destination. But the horses kept on with their quiet little trot, as their phlegmatic driver caressed them in a friendly way with his whip.

At every group of houses, the lights of which shone like eyes through the foliage, I bent out to see if we were nearing the place; for I had on a visiting-card an engraving of the château, in which I had long been

invited to spend a few days. But the end of the trip seemed to be constantly drawing farther and farther away, and the postilion, who did not seem any longer very sure of the way, exchanged a few words with the peasants whom he met, or who were attracted to their doors by the sound of wheels.

The road, happily, was still magnificent, still shaded by great trees in full leaf, sometimes bordered by quick-set hedges, through which the silver moonbeams shone, casting upon the sand the queerest shadows. When the foliage grew thinner, and allowed the sky to be seen, I perceived Donati's comet flaming and wild, carrying away the stars in its golden tail. I had seen it in Paris a few days before, but so faint, so pale, so indistinct! In one week, it had grown in a way to terrify an epoch more superstitious than ours.

In this faint, blue light, cut by deep shadows, into which the horses entered with a shudder, everything assumed strange and fantastic shapes. The road, following the undulations of the ground, ascended and descended. The view of the horizon was concealed by the hedges and the trees. I was utterly at a loss to know in what direction we were travelling. For one moment, I thought we had reached the end of our jour-

ney. A handsome dwelling, shining in the silver rays of the moon, stood out against a dark background of verdure, and its reflections trembled in a pond. It was very like what the château de L . . . had been described to me as being; but the postilion drove on.

Soon the carriage entered an avenue of very old trees which evidently led to a country-seat. On the left there was the gleam of waters, and great buildings loomed through the foliage, but I could make out nothing plainly. Presently the post-chaise swung round, and the wheels rattled over a bridge spanning a broad ditch. At the end of a bridge a low arch showed in a sort of bastion, which only lacked a portcullis. Having passed through this gate, I found myself in a courtyard, circular like the interior of a donjon, and the carriage was swallowed up in the darkness of another gateway.

All these things, of which I had a mere glance in the moonlight, and which were full of shadows, had a feudal and mediæval look and a fortress-like aspect that somewhat troubled me. I wondered whether, by chance, the postilion had made a mistake and driven me to the manor of Harold Harfargar or of Bjorn of

the Shining Eyes. My trip was turning into something legendary and fantastic.

At last we issued into a vast square, closed on one side by great buildings describing a prolonged hemicycle, the purpose of which I could not make out in the darkness, but which looked quite formidable in the obscurity. The chord of the arc, which seemed to figure the interior of a fortification round externally, was formed by the manor itself, the imposing mass of which, quite isolated, rose from a sort of lagoon. It had a roof with blunted angles and a high façade on which fell the bluish light of the moon, and sparkled here and there a window-pane, like a fish-scale.

Although it was not yet late, everybody seemed asleep in the place. It looked like one of those fairy palaces cast under a spell, at which arrives the prince who will break the charm.

The postilion drew up before a bridge that must have once been a drawbridge. Then lights shone in the windows. The door was opened. Servants approached, spoke a few words in German, and took my trunks, while looking at me with somewhat distrustful surprise. I was unable to ask them any questions, and I did not know whether I was really at L. . . .

The bridge spanned a second moat filled with water, silver-streaked, and led to a portico flanked by two granite pillars through which was reached a vast vestibule flagged with black and white marble, round which ran an oak wainscotting, the capitals of the pilasters being gilded. Stags' heads hung on the walls, and two small polished brass cannons were pointed at me. This did not strike me as very hospitable — cannons in a vestibule in the nineteenth century! I was then shewn to a drawing-room furnished with all the refinement of modern elegance.

Among the paintings there was a portrait, the work of a famous painter, representing the lady of the house in an Oriental dress. I recognised it at once. I was not mistaken. A young governess, who had come down, received me, speaking to me in unknown tongues.

I showed her the portrait, named the original, and handed her the card with the engraving. Her mistrustfulness vanished, and a lovely little girl some ten years of age, who until then had kept aside gazing at me with the dark, deep glance of childhood, came forward and said, "*I* understand French." I was saved. The lady of the castle, who had been called away for

a couple of days, was to return on the morrow, and had left orders that I was to be looked after.

Supper was served, and I was taken to my room up a monumental staircase that would have held comfortably a Paris house. The maid placed on a table two candlesticks, provided with German tapers as long as church candles, and withdrew.

The room, which formed part of an apartment of three or four rooms, was rather fanciful-looking. On the mantelpiece, Cupids, lighted up by the red reflections and resembling little devils, were warming themselves at a brazier, pretending to represent an allegory of Winter; through the windows, the moonbeams, brighter than the candlelight, fell in strange forms upon the floor.

Impelled by a feeling analogous to that which causes the heroines of Anne Radcliffe to wander with a lamp in their hand about the passages in haunted castles, I made, before going to bed, a reconnaissance of the place where I was.

At the back of the apartment a small drawing-room, adorned with a mirror and furnished with a sofa and arm-chairs, contained no place suitable for phantoms. The modern look of the steel engravings of Esmeralda

and her goat was reassuring. The antechamber to my bedroom was more disquieting. The walls were covered with old brown tapestries, representing formidable mastiffs held in leash by negroes, their names written beside them. All these animals, in the trembling light of my taper, seemed to be waving their curled-up tails and, opening and closing their mouths provided with ivory teeth, to be baying mutely, and to be straining at their leashes in an effort to spring at me. The negroes rolled their white eyes, and one of the dogs, called Raghul, looked savagely at me. Round the three rooms ran a lobby which turned back on itself. One of the walls, forming a gallery, was covered with portraits of ancestors and historical characters: men of fierce mien with full-bottomed wigs, steel breastplates studded with gold knobs, over which hung broad ribbons of orders of knighthood, their hand resting on commanders' batons, like the stone statue in "Don Juan," — every one with his helmet placed beside him upon a cushion; noble ladies of high lineage, in costumes of different epochs, with old-world graces and coquetries from beyond the tomb. There were imposing and discontented-looking dowagers, young women with powdered hair, in full court dress, with

laced waists and vast hoops over which were spread full skirts of rose or salmon-coloured damask, brocaded with silver, pointing with negligent hand to coronets of gems placed upon tables covered with velvet cloths.

These noble personages, who had turned wan and pale, had an alarmingly spectral appearance. Some of the tones had resisted the lapse of time better than others, and the unequal decomposition produced the strangest effects. One young countess, very charming in other respects, had preserved in her bloodless face lips of the most brilliant carmine, and blue eyes of unchangeable azure. Her living lips and mouth formed a weird and very terrifying contrast to her deathly pallor. Something seemed to be looking at me through the canvas as through a mask.

The portraits, as numerous as those exhibited by Ruy Gomez de Silva to King Carlos, in "Hernani," filled up the wall to the turn in the passage.

Having reached that point, — not without having experienced the slight shudder which even the bravest feel in a dark, unknown, and silent place, when gazing at the representation of people who lived in other ages, and whose forms thus represented have long since fallen to dust, — I hesitated on seeing that the passage

went on indefinitely, full of mystery and darkness. The light of my taper did not reach the end, and cast upon the wall my grimacing shadow, which accompanied me like a black servant, imitating my gestures with gloomy buffoonery. But, determined not to be a coward in my own presence, I continued on my way. Having reached the middle of the corridor, at a place where a projection in the wall took the place of a chimney-flue, a grated opening attracted my attention. Putting my light close to it, I made out a winding stairway, which sank within the very depths of the building and went up Heaven knows how high. The colour of the plastering round the grate proved that the opening had been made long after the building of the stairway, no doubt when the secret was discovered. Plainly, then, the Château of L . . . was constructed on the plan of the stage-setting of "Angelo, Tyrant of Padua," and at night steps must certainly be audible in the walls.

The corridor ended in a carefully closed door, more recent than the rest of the building; and had I known the legend attached to the room thus closed up, I should certainly have had nightmare; happily I was unaware of it; yet it was not without a slight feeling

of pleasure that the next morning I saw the bright light of day filtering through the windows and blinds.

Once its fanciful nocturnal aspect had vanished, the feudal manor turned out to be simply an old château modernised. It was the spectre of the former dwelling revisiting the glimpses of the moon that I had caught sight of the night before, and the impression I had felt had not been wholly an illusion. The pacific life of our own time had taken up its quarters in this group of fortresses, leaving the main lines intact, and in the darkness a mistake was excusable. The high semicircle of buildings, worthy of a princely residence, must have been casemates before they were turned into stables and offices. The entrance gate, with its two low arches, its drawbridge made into a permanent bridge, and its broad moat, seemed quite capable even yet of resisting an assault. Upon the outer gate a weather-worn bas-relief showed faintly a crucified Christ, with the holy women, protecting two lines of coats of arms in stone, set in the thick brick wall.

The château, surrounded by water on all sides, rested upon a foundation of blue granite; its red walls were topped with a roof of violet-coloured tiles and pierced with windows of very happy proportions. On the

opposite façade, in the axis of the vestibule, a bridge spanned the outer moat, and a little farther, beyond an open space, another bridge spanned the second moat, which encircled the dwelling. Beyond that again lay the garden. Great trees, vigorous though old, with all their foliage intact in spite of the autumn, and artistically grouped together, formed as it were the wings of this magnificent piece of scenery. A vast sward, as green as an English lawn, broken by clumps of geraniums, fuschias, dahlias, verbenas, chrysanthemums, Bengal roses, and other late-blooming flowers, spread like velvet up to an arbour, from which opened out a long avenue of lime trees, ending in a wall and moat, giving a view over luscious meads full of cattle.

A ball of burnished metal placed upon a broken shaft keyed up the prospect, and imparted to it a tone of green imitation gold. It is a German fashion for which the châtelaine's taste is not to be blamed. A similar ball is placed in the Castle court of Heidelberg.

On the right a rustic pavilion covered with clematis and aristolochia was furnished with sofas and arm-chairs, formed of knotty or curiously misshapen branches, and a long row of hothouses opened their glazed sashes to the warm rays of noonday. These

hothouses, the temperature in each of which was different, opened one into another. In one, orange, lime and citron trees, laden with fruit in various stages of ripeness, seemed to believe themselves in their native country, and not to regret, as did chilly Mignon, the land where the citron blooms. In another, cacti bristled, banana trees spread out their large, silky leaves, orchids swung their light tendrils from lamp-bowls of rose-coloured clay. A third contained arborescent camellias, their metallic foliage diapered with buds. Another hothouse was reserved for rare and delicate plants, exposed to the sun on benches in the form of steps. Painted and gilded cages adorned with glass beads hung from the ceiling, and were filled with birds that, deceived by the warmth, sang and chirruped as in springtime. The last hothouse, decorated with an imitation arbour, was used as a gymnasium by the children of the family.

In front of the hothouses a little imitation rockery covered with wall plants simulated a fountain, the basin of which was formed of the shell of a monstrous shell-fish. What a size must have been the mollusc that first inhabited this conch, fit to carry Aphrodite over the azure sea! A little farther fairly ripe peaches

showed their round, velvety cheeks upon their branches trained against the wall, and vine plants, the stems of which alone were exposed to the open air, were ripening beneath glass cases placed against the wall. A wood of firs covered with sombre verdure the slope of the garden, from which ran a light foot-bridge spanning the deep channel, half filled with water.

I ventured into the wood. The lower branches of firs, as is well known, wither as the tree grows and raises to heaven its verdant top. The whole of the lower portion of the forest resembled a landscape prepared in brown, in which the artist, interrupted in his work, had had time to put in only a few green touches. The sun cast here and there through the tawny warm shadows handfuls of ducats, which bounded from branch to branch and scattered over the brown earth denuded, as in all fir woods, of moss and grass. A suave aromatic odour was given out by the trees as they moved in the faint breeze, and from the forest issued a vague murmur like a sigh breathed by a human being.

The avenue took me to the edge of the wood, separated by a ditch from the plain, in which wandered cows and horses at liberty. I retraced my steps and returned to the château.

Shortly afterwards the little girl who spoke French came to tell me that her mother had arrived. I related to the beautiful châtelaine my nocturnal invasion of her manor, and expressed the regret that I had not with me a dwarf to sound the horn at the foot of her donjon. She asked me if I had slept well in spite of the peculiar environment of my room, and whether the phantom of the starved lady had appeared to me in a dream or in reality.

"Every castle has its legend," she said, "especially if it is old. No doubt you noticed that mysterious staircase which might be mistaken for a chimney flue. It leads to a room which cannot be seen from outside, and goes down to the cellars. In that room one of the lords of L . . . kept concealed from the eyes of all, and especially from the eyes of his wife, a lovely, devoted mistress, who had accepted that absolute seclusion in order to live under the same roof with the man she loved. Every night he caused to be prepared a repast which he fetched himself from the subterranean kitchen, and which he took up to the captive. One day, having started on some expedition, he was killed, and the prisoner, not receiving her meals, died of hunger. Long afterwards, the secret door having been discovered

in the course of some repairs and alterations, there was found at the foot of the stairs a dainty female skeleton, crouching in an attitude of despair, amid the remains of rich stuffs. Thus was found the sumptuously furnished retreat which had turned for the poor girl into a Tower of Hunger, more sinister than Ugolino's prison, for he at least had his four sons to eat. Sometimes her shape walks at night through the passages, and if she meets a stranger, she seems to beg for food with hungry gestures. I will have a less gloomy room given to you this evening."

Guided by my hostess I visited a suite of apartments decorated in the taste of the last century. In the dining-room, massive old silver plate and services in old Dresden china shone behind the glass of curiously carved sideboards. The immense drawing-room with five windows of a side, was adorned with portraits of royal personages hung upon the white and gold wainscotting, and from the ceiling hung lustres of rock crystal, with transparent branches and cut leaves. Near by, a smaller drawing-room hung with green damask had nothing particular, save the portrait of a nobleman in armour, with flying scarf, wearing the orders of the Elephant and of Dannebrog, and smiling

with a grace that smacked of Versailles. Through the painter's carelessness, the nobleman turned his back on the companion painting, representing a young lady with powdered hair, in full court dress of apple-green taffeta glazed with silver. This fact seemed to trouble him a good deal, for he was half looking round. The young lady would have been very pretty but for her nose, which was aristocratically hooked, and came down over her lips like the beak of a parrot eating a cherry. Her soft, dull eyes seemed to deplore this comically Bourbon nose, that spoiled her lovely face in spite of the efforts the artist had made to attenuate it.

As I was gazing attentively at that strange face, at once attractive and ridiculous in spite of its high-bred air, my hostess said: —

"There is a legend about this painting also: but do not fear, it is in no wise dreadful. If you sneeze when you pass before the long-nosed countess, she answers by a nod or a 'God bless you,' like the portraits hung in the rooms of inns in fairy plays. Be careful to avoid catching cold and the painting will give no sign of life."

The bedrooms were furnished with great beds of tapestry or damask, the head against the wall, so as to

leave a space on either side. The hangings of one of the rooms consisted of old-fashioned great distemper paintings on canvas set in the panels, and representing pastoral scenes, in which the German artist had endeavoured to imitate Boucher's gallantry and pretension, but had only attained awkward affectation and curious colouring.

"Would you like this room?" asked my hostess. "Its rococo is very reassuring against nocturnal terrors." I refused, for I did not care to see around me in silence and solitude, in the faint light of a lamp or a taper, figures which seemed to desire to leave the wall and to ask me for the souls the painter has forgotten to give them. I made choice of a pretty room hung with chintz, with a small modern bed. It was situated at the corner of the château, and provided with two tall windows. There was behind it no dark corridor, no spiral staircase, and the walls when struck did not sound hollow. The one disadvantage was that to reach it I had to pass the lady with the parrot beak; and I confess without shame that too polite portraits are not to my taste. But I had not got a cold, and the young countess could remain quiet in her polished frame.

The most curious thing in the manor was a sixteenth-century hall, preserved intact, which made me regret that the owners of the place had thought it well at the beginning of the last century to renovate the decoration of their apartments in the taste of Versailles. It is impossible to imagine how despotically that style reigned for a long period, and how many beautiful things it caused to be destroyed. This hall was wainscotted with small oaken panels, forming frames of uniform size, and relieved by a few old arabesques of a dull gold that harmonised with the tone of the woodwork. Each frame contained an emblematic painting in oil, accompanied by a motto in Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, German, or French, relating to the subject represented. These inscriptions were moral, gallant, chivalrous, Christian, philosophical, proud, refined, plaintive, witty, or oracular. In them *concetti* rivalled with *agudezzas;* puns rubbed up against witticisms; the Latin, in its grim enigmatic concision, assumed sphinx-like airs, and looked curiously at the more limpid Greek; Petrarchian platonisms, amorous subtleties after the manner of Scalion de Virbluneau, helped to obscure by their explanations the already complicated and not very intelligible attributes. Painted

thus from plinth to cornice, the hall could have furnished mottoes for carrousels, Tembleque garters, Albacete *navajas*, the seals of an engraver's shop, the sweets of a confectioner, the long onion rolls of Saint-Cloud; but amid much stupidity, puerility, and subtlety, there sometimes flashed out a fine sentence full of deep, unexpected meaning, worthy of being inscribed upon a lady's ring or a sword-blade. I am not acquainted with any similar example of decoration. Of course inscriptions and monograms intertwined with ornaments are to be met with, but nowhere the emblem and the motto taken for unique theme of the decoration.

Now that you are acquainted with the château, let us take a turn in the neighbourhood. Two jet-black ponies, harnessed to a light phaeton, are shaking their long manes and stamping impatiently at the end of the bridge. My hostess takes the reins in her lovely hands, and we are off. We drive rapidly, following a broad road through vast meadows, where graze and chew their cud more than three hundred cows, posed in a way to delight Paul Potter and Troyon. The bulls, much better-tempered than the Spanish ones, let us pass without any other manifestation than a cross glance,

and go on grazing. Horses, excited by our ponies' speed, accompany us for a time and then leave us. The fields extend all round, slightly undulating and bounded by earthen dikes topped with hedges. In every meadow is a gate formed of two posts and a cross-bar, and one has to spring from the phaeton and raise the bar, which the spirited little fellows would otherwise jump with the carriage.

In less than twenty minutes we reached a most picturesque wood planted on a height. Elms, oaks, and ash trees with mighty trunks and thick foliage grew in the varied attitudes, the quaint forms and the vigorous twists of trees growing on a slope. The wood was full of roe deer, and badgers had their abode there, pretty sure not to be disturbed by men. Here and there, as if to recall the North, pines stretched out their branches and raised up their dark-green mass. The freshness of the vegetation astonished me, for we were close to the sea, the salt breath of which usually burns the foliage. But these trees drew abundant sap from the moist ground and easily resisted the ocean winds.

On leaving the wood I saw the gulf spreading out into the open sea, the North Sea, the other extremity of which beats against the icy cap of the pole, and in

winter carries along the ice-floes laden with white bears. At this moment it had nothing Arctic about it. A clear sky dappled with a few clouds was reflected in it, and coloured the gray water with a bluer azure than that of our own heavens. A gentle tide caused to wave upon the beach the long algæ, tough as leather, dragged about fragments of shells, and left a long fringe of foam upon the shore.

During the following days we drove greater distances, but tall white Mecklenburg horses of less spirited temper had taken the place of the little black whirlwinds; a martial, phlegmatic-looking coachman drove them.

I visited a house surrounded like L . . . with a double ditch, and admired the hall, the ceiling of which was ornamented with sculptures in high relief, representing muses, winged genii, and musical instruments. The sight of an organ caused me to wonder what the purpose of the room was, whether a music-room or a chapel. The artists of the eighteenth century did not trouble much on such points. They willingly confused angels and loves, the glories of the opera and the glories of paradise. The old lady, the mistress of the house, received me in a drawing-room filled with pillars, the ceiling curiously adorned with coats of arms and rockery

work. She caused to be brought a tray of peaches, pears, and grapes, in accordance with the hospitable custom of the country, where a collation is always served to visitors. Near the house spread a garden, or rather a park, intersected by avenues of prodigiously tall lime trees. On a basin covered all over with bubbles, a swan was sailing along with curved neck, tearing the glaucous surface, which immediately closed behind him. The sight of that swan made me remember that there were none at L . . . , although the engraving I had showed them. The preceding winter they had been eaten in their house by foxes, which had crossed on the frozen waters. Less melodious than their brethren of Meander, no sound had been heard from them at their last hour, and only a few feathers had been found.

Sometimes our carriage met a humorous and rather grotesque spectacle, — a powerful fellow, his cap over his ear, his pipe in his mouth, wearing long jackboots, and squatting in a child's carriage, was lazily drawn round, not by molossi, great dogs, or mastiffs, such as Stevens paints, but by three or four little dogs so absolutely disproportioned to the weight they drew that one could not help laughing. These poor brutes led a dog's life in the full meaning of the expression. While I am

talking about dogs, let me remark that in Denmark I did not see a single Dane, — that is, of the kind with the white coat regularly spotted with black, which often have one eye blue and the other brown. They are usually mongrel animals without points, cross-bred by chance, bastard-like, having no type of their own and resembling more street dogs, but conscientiously performing their duty of escorting carriages and barking when entering or going out of a village.

The villages, or hamlets, are marked by a cleanliness and comfort which it is difficult to understand unless one has seen them. The houses, regularly built of brick and usually roofed with tiles, though sometimes with thatch, with clean window-panes, behind which bloom rare flowers in porcelain jars, look more like small villas than like peasants' cottages. The suburban homes rented at such high prices to Parisians do not come up to these pretty golden-red houses, with their background of verdure, almost always built on the edge of a pond.

Nor does the aspect of the inhabitants spoil the effect of the picture. Their dress is neither ragged nor mean. The men wear caps with broad Prussian visors, their trousers tucked into their boots, short vests,

and long-skirted frock-coats; the women, short-sleeved dresses, opened well out on the bosom; and they usually go about bareheaded. It made me shiver to see them — for the weather was already cool — in light print dresses striped with lilac, rose, or blue; their red arms, marked with blood like those in paintings by Jordaëns, had the robustness acquired by the portions of the body exposed to the air. Yet their flesh tones, too strongly vermilion, proved that they were not insensible to atmospheric influences. But this fashion is followed only by women of the lower classes and servants, — ladies, as everywhere else, dressing in the French style.

I spent another day on an excursion to Eckernfoerde, a small town some miles from L. . . . The road ran between hedges diapered with berries of all colours, mulberries, rowan, sloe, and barberry, besides those pretty coral hips which survive the blooming of the wild rose; so it was charming. At other times we passed beautiful great trees, or through little villages, or by fields which teams of splendid horses were harrowing in circular fashion, as if they proposed to make the land resemble watered silk. Finally we reached the seashore by a road bathed by the waves on the one hand, and on the

other ornamented with elegant homes half concealed in flowers, which are let for the season to summer visitors; for L . . . is a seaside resort like Trouville or Dieppe, in spite of its somewhat northern latitude. The bathing-houses and bathing-huts scattered over the beach proved that intrepid members of both sexes still fearlessly faced the icy waves. A few trading-brigs swung at their anchors in the harbour.

Eckernfoerde, save that it has the peculiar character given to every town by shipping mingling with trees and chimneys, is not very different from Schlesvig from an architectural point of view. It has the same brick churches, the same houses with broad transversal bays, through which, behind pots of flowers, one gets a glimpse of low-necked women busy sewing. An unusual bustle enlivened the streets of Eckernfoerde, which are usually more than dull. Heavy carts were carrying off to their respective districts soldiers on furlough or mustered out. Although crowded most incommodiously, the men seemed intoxicated with joy, and perhaps also with beer.

At the château the days went by diversified by walks, fishing, conversation, smoking, and my nights were not haunted by any unpleasant phantoms: the starved

lady did not come to beg for food; the princess with the parrot beak had no opportunity to say "God bless you" to me. Once only a storm of rain driven by a terrible wind lashed my windows, with sinister sounds resembling the flapping of owls' wings. The sashes trembled, the woodwork creaked strangely, the reeds rustled noisily, the waters lapped the bottom of the wall. From time to time a gust smashed against the door like some one who had no key and was trying to enter; but no one did come in, and little by little the sighs, the murmurs, the moans, all the inexplicable sounds of night died out in a deep *decrescendo* which Beethoven himself could not have graduated better. The next day the weather was lovely, and the clean sky shone more brilliantly. I should have liked to remain, but if it be true that all roads lead to Rome, it is not quite so sure that they also lead to St. Petersburg, and I had somewhat forgotten the purpose of my trip in the delights of the enchanted castle. The carriage took me to Kiel, where I was to take the train for Hamburg, and thence to Lubec to ship on board the steamer "Neva."

LUBEC

I HAD to go to Kiel to get to the railway. There the rain began to fall, light at first, then in torrents, but it did not prevent my traversing under my umbrella the handsome promenade by the seaside until the time the train started for Hamburg.

Hamburg is worth seeing again, and I enjoyed wandering once more through its animated, living, picturesque streets. On the way I noticed a number of details that had escaped me; for instance, the wooden boxes, iron-bound and padlocked, at the corner of the bridges, where, with a picture on which, to excite the pity of the peasants, are collected in artless fashion all imaginable maritime disasters, tempests, thunderstorms, fires, huge billows, sharp reefs, capsized vessels, sailors clinging to the tops and illustrating through the foam Virgil's classic line, —

"Rari nantes in gurgite vasto."

Often a sailor, tanned by the suns of other climes, puts his hand into his tarry pocket and throws a shilling

into the box. A little girl stands on tiptoe to intrust her mite to it. These contributions form a fund distributed, I believe, to the families of shipwrecked mariners. There is something religious and poetic about these boxes, intended to collect alms for the victims of the ocean, placed within a few steps of the ships about to go down unto the deep. Human solidarity forsakes none of its members, and the seaman sails away less anxious than he would otherwise be.

The next evening the railway took me to Lubec, through beautiful cultivated land, and summer residences laved by brownish waters bordered by willows. The Hamburg Venice has its Brenta Canal, the villas on which, though not built by Sammichele or Palladio, nevertheless look very well against their fresh green backgrounds.

On alighting from the carriage, a private omnibus picked me up and took me with my luggage to the Hotel Duffckes. When I saw it in the darkness by the faint light of the street lamps, the town struck me as picturesque, and the next morning when I opened my window, I saw at once that I had not been mistaken. The house opposite had a very German look.

It was extremely high, with an old-fashioned gable. It had no less than seven stories, but the windows diminished in number in the gable. The highest story had only one light. At every story iron bars in the form of crosses blossomed out in lovely iron-work, acting both as supports and ornaments to the building, — an excellent principle in architecture, which is too much forgotten to-day. It is not by concealing, but on the contrary by accentuating, the framework of the building that character is obtained.

Nor was this house the only one of the kind, as I readily ascertained after proceeding a short distance down the street. Modern Lubec is still, so far as outward appearance goes at least, mediæval Lubec, the old city, the chief city of the Hanseatic League. Modern life goes on in the old city. The side-scenes have not been disturbed too much, nor has the back-drop been unskilfully repainted. What a pleasure it is to wander about thus among the forms of the past, and to behold intact the dwellings inhabited by vanished generations! No doubt living man has a right to mould for himself a shell to suit his own habits, tastes, and manners; but a new city is far less interesting than an old town.

On leaving the hotel, a piece of carving set within the wall attracted my glance, in quest of curiosities. Carving is rather rare in brick countries. This piece of work represented nymphs, nereids, or sirens, very pleasantly ornamental and chimerical in character, supporting great coats of arms in the German taste, — an excellent decorative theme when properly employed, and the Middle Ages knew how to employ it.

A cloister, or at least the gallery of some old monastery, next turned up. This portico runs along a square, at the back of which rises the Marienkirche, a brick church of the fourteenth century. Proceeding farther, I soon reached the market-place, where I was recompensed for much of my weariness by a monument of a new, unexpected, original aspect. The old City Hall, which was formerly the meeting-place of the Hanseatic League, rose suddenly before me. It occupies two sides of the square. Imagine in front of the Marienkirche, the spires and oxidized copper roof of which rise above it, a high brick façade, blackened by time, with three belfries, with pointed, verdigrised roofs; the façade itself cut out by two great rose windows, without interior tracery and covered with coats of arms, inscribed within the trefoils of the Gothic arches, bearing

double-headed eagles sable on a field or, shields parti of gules and argent ranged alternately, and of the proudest heraldic port.

Against this façade stands a stone palazzino of the Renaissance, in a very different taste, the grayish-white tone of which stands out admirably from the dark-red background of the old bricks. This palace, with its three volute gables, its fluted Ionic pillars, its caryatids, or rather its Atlases, for they are men, its semicircular windows, its shell-like niches, its gallery pierced with windows, with triangular pediments, its arcades decorated with figures, its lower courses cut in facets, produces the most unexpected and delightful architectural dissonance. There are very few buildings of that style and of that time to be met with in the North. The Reformation cared little for the return to pagan ideas and to classical forms, modified by a graceful fancy.

On the other part of the façade, at right angles to this, the old German recovers its supremacy. Brick arches, supported by short granite columns, bear up a gallery with ogival windows. A row of coats of arms, inclined from right to left, exhibit their enamels and colours against the dark tint of the wall. This

simple ornamentation is uncommonly characteristic and rich.

The gallery leads to a main building, which the fancy of a scene-painter, in search of a motive for the back-drop of an opera, could not make more singular and picturesque. The sharp lines of five turrets, topped by pepper-pot roofs, rise above the top line of the façade, itself broken by tall ogival windows, most of them unfortunately half bricked up and spoiled, no doubt on account of internal alterations. Eight great discs, with gold backgrounds representing radiant suns, double-headed eagles, and the argent and gules coat of arms of Lubec, bloom splendidly upon this quaint architecture. Below, arcades with squat pillars open their sombre mouths, within which sparkle faintly the show-windows of goldsmiths' shops.

Turning towards the square, the green spires of another church are seen beyond the houses, and above the heads of the women selling fish and vegetables, the lines of a small edifice with brick pillars, which must formerly have been a pillory. It gives a final touch to the perfectly Gothic appearance of the square, unspoiled by any modern houses.

It suddenly occurred to me that the superb City Hall

must have another façade. I was right, for having passed under an archway, I found myself in a broad street, and there I again began to admire.

Five pillars, half engaged in the wall, and separated by long ogival windows, partly bricked up, repeated, though in a varied form, the façade I have just described. This one is marked by curious brick-work designs, in the form of roses, carried out in square points, like embroidery models. At the foot of the sombre edifice, a pretty little Renaissance lodge, built later, gives access to an outer stairway, that climbs the wall diagonally up to a *mirador*, or projecting window, in the most delightful taste. Dainty statues of Faith and Justice, gallantly draped and playing with their attributes, decorate this portico.

The stairway, carried upon arches, which grow larger as they ascend higher, is ornamented with caryatids and masks. The mirador, placed above the ogival door leading to the market, is crowned with an irregular, voluted pediment, in which a figure of Themis holds the scales in one hand, and the sword in the other, not forgetting meanwhile to make her drapery puff out coquettishly. A curious order formed of fluted pilasters, cut in Hermes shape, and supporting busts, divides

the windows of this aerial cage. Brackets with fanciful masks complete this elegant ornamentation, over which time has passed its hand just sufficiently to give to the carvings that particular soft touch which nothing can imitate.

The remainder of the building is of similar architecture. Along it runs a stone frieze of masks, small figures, and foliage, all weather-worn, blackened and dirtied so that scarcely anything can be made out. Under a porch supported by Gothic pillars of polished granite, on either side of the door, I observed two benches, the outer arms of which are formed of two thick bronze slabs representing, the one an emperor, crowned and holding the orb and the hand of justice; the other a wild man as hairy as a wild beast, armed with a club and bearing a shield with the coat of arms of Lubec. This is very old work.

The Marienkirche, which, as I have said, is behind the City Hall, is worth visiting. Its two steeples are four hundred and eight feet high. A beautifully traceried pillar rises from the roof at the intersection of the transept and the nave. The Lubec steeples are peculiar in this, that they are every one of them out of plumb and lean to the right or left very plainly, without,

however, giving any anxiety, as does the Tower degli Asinelli at Bologna, or the Leaning Tower at Pisa. From a distance, these drunk, staggering steeples, with their painted caps, which seem to salute the horizon, form a strange and delightful silhouette.

On entering the church, the first curiosity met with is an old copy of the Todtentanz, or Dance of Death, in the cemetery at Basle. I need not describe it in detail. The Middle Ages invented numerous variants of this funereal theme. Most of them are collected in this gloomy painting, which covers every one of the walls of a chapel. From the Pope and the emperor down to the child in his cradle, every human being in turn dances with the unavoidable scarecrow. Death is not represented by a clean, white, polished skeleton, hinged with brass, like skeletons in an anatomical museum; that would be too pretty for old Mob. It shows in the condition of a body more or less decomposed; bits of hair still stick to its skull, and blackish loam still fills its half-emptied eyes; the skin on its bosom hangs like a ragged napkin; its flattened stomach sticks hideously to the vertebræ, and its muscles, laid bare, fall round the leg bones like broken strings round a violin handle. None of the hideous

secrets stolen from the privacy of the tomb are passed over.

The Greeks respected death, and represented it only in the form of a handsome sleeping youth; but the Middle Ages, less delicate, dragged off its shroud and exposed it bare, with its horror and its misery, the pious intention being to edify the living. On this mural painting, Death has so little shaken off the thick humus of the grave that the curious eye might mistake it for a consumptive negro.

Very rich and highly ornamented tombs, with statues, allegories, attributes, coats of arms, long epitaphs inscribed on the walls or suspended from groups of pillars, forming a sepulchral chapel, as in the church dei Frari in Venice, make of the Marienkirche an interior worthy of Pieter Neeffs, the painter in ordinary to cathedrals.

The Marienkirche contains also two paintings by Overbeck: "The Descent from the Cross," and "The Entry into Jerusalem," both greatly admired in Germany. They are inspired by pure religious sentiment, and full of the emotionality and suavity of the master, but these are spoiled for me by an affectation of archaism and deliberate artlessness. For the rest, the delicacy of the execution proves that Overbeck studied

the delightful early masters of the Umbrian School. Both in this building and in the painting by him in the Pinacothek at Munich, fair Germany has asked of Italy the secret of art.

The cathedral, which is also called the *Dom*, is quite remarkable internally. In the centre of the nave, filling up the whole arcade, a colossal Christ in the Gothic style is nailed upon a traceried cross adorned with arabesques. The foot of the cross rests upon a transverse beam running from one pillar to the other, which bears the holy women and pious personages in attitudes of adoration and grief. On either side Adam and Eve arrange as decently as they may their terrestrial paradise costume; under the cross blossoms a pendentive or keystone, exceedingly rich and ornate, on which rests a long-winged angel.

This work thus suspended, and, in spite of its mass, light to the eye, is of wood, wrought with much skill and taste. I cannot give a better idea of it than by saying that it is a portcullis of sculpture, half lowered across the choir. It is the first instance I have seen of such an arrangement.

Behind it rises the *jubé*, with its three arches, its gallery of statues, its mechanical clock, — the hours

struck by a skeleton and an angel bearing the cross. The font is in the form of a carefully wrought small building, with granite pillars, between which is seen a group representing Jacob wrestling with the angel. The cover is formed of the dome of the monument, and is raised by a cord hung from the ceiling. I shall not mention the tombs, the funeral chapels, the organs, but merely add a couple of words about two paintings in fresco or distemper, accompanied by a long inscription in Latin pentameters, in one of which is seen the miraculous stag set free by Charlemagne, with a collar bearing the date of its freedom, and in the other, the same stag taken four or five hundred years later by a hunter, at the very spot where now rises the church.

The Holstienthor or Holstein Gate, which is close to the railway station, is one of the most curious and picturesque specimens of German mediæval architecture. Two huge brick towers, connected by a building in which opens a circular arch, form the motive; but it is difficult to imagine the effect produced by the height of the building, the pointed roofs of the towers, the fanciful dormer windows, and the dark-red or deep purple tones of the weather-worn brick.

On following the quay, along which runs the railway, with its goods trains, one enjoys a most entertaining and varied prospect. On the other bank of the Trave, vessels and boats in different states of progress show among the cottages and clumps of trees. Now it is a wooden-ribbed hull resembling the skeleton of a stranded whale; now a hull planked all over, near which smokes the calker's tar caldron, from which escape golden clouds. Everywhere a delightful swarming of human activity. The carpenters hammer and nail, the porters push the barrels, the sailors are holystoning the decks of the ships or else hoisting the sails to dry them in the sun; an arriving vessel comes up close to the quay, displacing the flotilla, that opens for a moment to give it passage; steamers are getting up or blowing off steam; and on turning towards the city, above the spars of the vessels show the steeples of the churches gracefully raked like a clipper's masts.

THE SEA PASSAGE

THE "Neva" started on time, going at half speed down the meanderings of the Trave, the banks of which are covered with pretty country homes, the summer resorts of the rich inhabitants of Lubec. As we neared the sea, the stream broadened, the shores became lower, and the navigable channel was marked by buoys. I am very fond of flat landscapes; they are more picturesque than people believe. A tree, a house, a steeple, a boat's sail, become extremely important in them, and suffice, with a faint receding background, to make up a picture.

On the narrow line between the pale blue of the heavens and the pearl gray of the waters showed the silhouette of a town or large village, probably Travemünde. Then the shores receded more and more, became lower, and finally vanished. As we proceeded the water turned greener. Its undulations, faint at first, became more marked and changed into waves. Whitecaps shook their foamy crests on top of the

billows. The horizon was closed by that bar of a hard blue which is, as it were, the signature of the ocean. We were at sea.

Marine painters appear to be very anxious to paint the water transparent, and when they succeed, this epithet is applied to their work with eulogy. Yet the sea itself is marked by a heavy, thick, solid, peculiarly opaque look. It is not possible for an observing eye to mistake its dense, heavy water for fresh water. No doubt when a sunbeam strikes slantingly through a wave, it imparts partial transparency to it, but the general tone is almost mat. Its local strength is such that the nearer portions of the sky appear discoloured by it. By the gravity and intensity of the tints, one knows that the element is formidable, irresistible, energetic, and of prodigious mass.

On entering the open sea even the most fearless, the most courageous, and those who are best used to it, experience a certain solemn impression. For it is leaving the land, — where no doubt death may overtake one, but where at least the ground does not open under one's feet, — in order to traverse the vast salt plain, the epidermis of the abyss which covers so many lost ships. One is separated from the surging depths

by a mere thin plank of wood or sheet of iron which a wave can burst open or a reef cut in two. All that is needed to capsize the ship is a sudden squall, a shift of wind, and then the swimmer's skill serves only to prolong his agony.

The sun went down in a bank of gray clouds, the edges of which it reddened, and which the wind soon swept away. The horizon is a solitary waste; no more vessels show upon it. Under the pale-violet sky the sea darkens and assumes a sinister tone; by-and-by the violet turns into steel blue, the water becomes quite black, and the whitecaps gleam on it like silver tears upon a funeral pall. Myriads of green-gold stars constellate the heavens, and a comet displaying its vast tail seems about to dive into the sea. For one moment the tail is cut by a narrow passing cloud.

The next morning the sun rose heavy-eyed, like one who has slept badly, and with difficulty pushed away its misty curtains. Its pale-yellow beams emerged out of the vapour and spread through from between the clouds like the golden rays of halos. The breeze was fresher, and the ships which showed from time to time on the horizon line, performed strange parabolæ. Towards evening the skies darkened, the rain began to

fall, light at first, then heavy, and, as the saying is, the rain beat down the wind, greatly diminishing the sharpness of the breeze. From time to time flashed in the darkness the white or red light, fixed or revolving, of a lighthouse, pointing out the shore to be avoided. We had entered the Gulf.

When day dawned, low flat land — forming an almost imperceptible line between sea and sky, and which might have been mistaken for a morning mist, or the spray of waves — showed on our right. Sometimes even the land, owing to the curvature of the sea, was invisible. Rows of trees, faintly looming up, seemed to emerge from the waters. The same effect was produced by dwellings and the lighthouses, the white towers of which were often mingled with the sails of vessels.

We passed close to an islet of barren rocks on our left; at least they appeared barren from where we saw them. There seemed to be a great many boats about its shores, and before I used my glasses I mistook the sails, turned towards the rising sun against the violet background of the shore, for the façades of houses. But when I examined it more closely, the island proved to be deserted, and had merely a look-out built upon a slope.

The third night fell upon the waters. It was the last we were to spend on board, for the next day at eleven, if nothing delayed us, we were to be in sight of Cronstadt. I remained a long time on deck, devoured by feverish curiosity, and gazing into the darkness, dotted here and there with red sparks of shore lights. At last, after two or three hours' sleep, I went on deck again, forestalling the dawn, which was lazy that day; at least, so it seemed to me.

Who is there that has not experienced the curious sensation which immediately precedes dawn? The air is always damp, icy, shivery. Strong men feel anxious; the sick feel their strength ebbing away; fatigue becomes greater; the phantoms of darkness, the nocturnal terrors seem, as they flee away, to touch one with cold, bat-like wings. It is a time when men recall the dead and the absent; when they look back with melancholy glance upon their past lives, and regret the home they have voluntarily abandoned. But with the first beam of the sun, all these things are forgotten.

A steamer, dragging behind it its long plume of smoke blown down on the water, passed on our right. It was coming from Cronstadt and was bound westward.

THE SEA PASSAGE

The gulf narrowed more and more. The low-lying shores were now bare, now covered with summer verdure; watch towers rose from the waves; vessels and ships came and went along the channel marked by buoys; the shallower sea had changed colour as we neared the land. Gulls, the first we had seen, were swooping round gracefully. Through my glasses I saw ahead of us two rose spots dotted with black, a spangle of gold and a spangle of green, a few tenuous threads like cobwebs, wisps of white smoke ascending into the motionless, perfectly pure air. It was Cronstadt.

In Paris during the war, I had seen a good many more or less imaginary plans of Cronstadt, with the cross-fire of the guns figured by multiple lines, like the rays of a star, and I had taxed my imagination to represent the city as it really was, without, however, succeeding in doing so. The most detailed plans do not give the faintest idea of the actual appearance of a place.

The paddle-wheels, churning the calm and almost stagnant water, drove us along rapidly, and I could already plainly make out on our left a round fort with four stories of embrasures, and on our right a square

bastion commanding the pass. Water-line batteries showed low down. The yellow spangle had changed into a golden dome wondrously brilliant and transparent. The whole of the light was concentrated upon one point, and the shadowed parts were of an exquisitely delicate amber tone. The green spangle was a dome painted in that colour, and could have been mistaken for oxidised copper. A golden dome and a green cupola — Russia at our first glance had shown itself with its characteristic colours.

On the bastion rose one of those tall signalling masts which look so well in marine views, and behind a granite breakwater were the warships, housed for the winter. Numerous vessels, bearing the colours of all nations, filled the port, and formed with their masts and rigging a sort of pine forest, half the boughs of which had been cut off. A rigging machine, with its derricks and blocks, rose at the corner of the quay, where lay piles of squared timber. Farther back were seen the houses of the town, painted in various colours, some with green roofs, but all very low, the horizontal line they formed being topped only by the domes of churches surrounded by their little cupolas. Very strongly fortified cities show very little to the eye, as

well as to guns. Of course perfection would be attained if they were not seen at all, and this no doubt will be managed some day.

From a building with a Greek front, either the Custom House or the Police Headquarters, came away boats, pulling hard toward our steamer, which had anchored in the roads. It reminded me of the visits of the health officers in the Levant, where fellows much more plague-stricken than we were, and breathing disinfectants, came to take our papers at the end of long pairs of tongs. Everybody was on deck; and in a boat which seemed to wait until, every formality having been fulfilled, some traveller should land at Cronstadt, I saw my first moujik.

He was a man of twenty-eight to thirty years of age, with long hair parted in the middle, a slightly curly blond beard like that which painters give to Jesus Christ, with well-formed limbs, and handling with ease his pair of sculls. He wore a rose-coloured shirt, drawn in at the waist, the tails of which, left out of the trousers, formed a sort of graceful tunic or jacket. The full, blue cloth trousers, with many folds, were stuffed into the boots. His head-dress consisted of a toque, or small flat-crowned hat, smaller in the

middle and flaring out at the top and with a circular brim.

Brought alongside by their boats, the employees of the police and the Custom House, wearing long coats and the Russian cap, and most of them decorations or medals, climbed up on deck and performed their part very politely. We went down to the main saloon to have our passports returned to us, for on starting they had been handed to the Captain. There were Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, Greeks, Italians, and members of other nationalities. To my great surprise, the police officer, quite a young man, changed his language with every person, and replied in English to the English, in German to the Germans, and so on, without ever making a mistake as to the nationality. Like Cardinal Angelo Mai, he seemed to know every tongue. When my turn came, he returned my passport, saying in the purest Parisian accent, "You have been long expected in St. Petersburg." The truth is I had taken the longest way round, and spent a month in making a journey which can be done in a week. To the passport was affixed a paper in three languages stating the formalities to be fulfilled on reaching the city of the Czars.

THE SEA PASSAGE

The steamer started again, and standing on the prow, I watched eagerly the marvellous prospect which unfolded itself before me. We had entered that arm of the sea into which flows the Neva, and which looked more like a lake than a gulf. As we were in the centre of the channel, the shores on either hand were scarcely visible. The water, widely outspread, seemed to be higher than the land, as yet thin as a pencil-stroke on a water-colour drawing in flat tints. The weather was superb; a brilliant though cold light fell from the clear sky. It was a Northern azure, a polar azure, so to speak, with gradations and tones of opal and steel, of which our own sky can give no idea,—a pure, white, sidereal light, seeming not to come from the sun, and such as we imagine when in dreams we are transported into another planet! Under this milky vault, the vast gulf was coloured with indescribable tints, wholly lacking the ordinary tones of water. Sometimes it was pearly white, like the interior of certain shells; sometimes an incredibly delicate pearl-gray; then again, blue, mat, or striated like Damascus blades; or else, again, iridescent reflections like those that shimmer on the surface of molten tin; a zone polished as ice followed a broad band goffered like

watered silk; but all so light, so soft, so vague, so limpid, so clear, that no palette could reproduce it, no vocabulary suffice to describe it. The purest tones of a painter's brush would have made a spot of mud, as it were, upon that ideal transparency, and the words that I am using to render that marvellous light seem to me like blots of ink falling from a pen and splashing on the finest azure-coloured parchment. When a vessel happened to pass near us, its tone of reality, its salmon-coloured spars and its sharp details, made it resemble, in this celestial blue, a balloon floating in the air. Nothing can be imagined more fairy-like than that luminous infinity.

In the distance rose slowly between the milky water and the milky sky above, with its mural crown crenellated with towers, the magnificent outline of St. Petersburg, the amethyst tones of which separated by a line of demarcation the two pallid immensities. Gold sparkled in spangles and flashes upon that diadem, the richest and handsomest ever worn on a city's brow. St. Isaac's showed between its four belfries its tiara-like gold cupola. The Admiralty's dazzling spire rose in the heavens; the domes of the Church of St. Michael the Archangel swelled in Muscovite fashion; the cross-

crocketed pyramidions of the Church of the Horse Guards, stood boldly out, and an immense number of more distant steeples gleamed with metallic lustre. Nothing could be finer than that golden city, set on a silver horizon, in which the evening light had all the paleness of the dawn.

ST. PETERSBURG

THE Neva is a handsome river about as broad as the Thames at London Bridge. It has not a very long course. It issues from Lake Ladoga, not far away, the surplus waters of which it pours into the Gulf of Finland. A few turns of the paddle wheels brought us up to a granite quay, alongside which lay a whole flotilla of smaller steamers, schooners, and barques.

On the other side, that is, on the right as we ascended the current, rose the roofs of immense sheds in building-yards; on the left, great buildings with palatial façades, which, I was told, were the Mining Department and the Naval School.

It is no slight matter to trans-ship the luggage, trunks, valises, bandboxes, packages of all kinds, which encumber the decks of a steamer at the time of debarkation, and to recognise one's property in the mass. A swarm of moujiks soon carried away all the luggage to

the Customs Inspection Office on the quay, each of them followed by disquieted owners.

Most of these moujiks wore a pink shirt over their trousers in jacket fashion, full trousers, and long boots. Others, although the temperature was unseasonably warm, already wore their *tulupes*, or sheepskin coats. These coats are worn with the wool inside, and when new the tanned skin is of a pale-salmon colour rather pleasant to the eye; they are ornamented with stitching, and the whole thing is rather characteristic. The moujik clings to his tulupe as does the Arab to his burnouse; once he puts it on he does not take it off; it becomes his tent and his bed; he lives in it night and day, sleeps in it in any corner, on any bench, on any stove. So the coat soon becomes greasy, shiny, glazed, and acquires those brown tones that Spanish painters love to reproduce in their picaresque paintings. But, unlike the models of Ribera and Murillo, the moujik is clean under his dirty coat, for he takes a vapour bath once a week. These light-haired, broad-bearded men, wearing the skins of animals, on that magnificent quay, from which gilded domes and spires are seen in either direction, excite the foreigner's imagination by the contrast they present. Yet do not

imagine that they have anything fierce or terrifying about them; on the contrary, they have very intelligent faces, and their polished manners would shame our brutal porters.

Having fulfilled the formalities at the Custom House, the passengers were free to scatter through the city. A multitude of drojkis, and small carts for the transportation of luggage, were waiting outside the Custom House, sure of not lacking clients. I did know in French the name of the place to which I had been told to go, but I had to translate it in Russian to the coachman. One of the guides, men who speak no language in particular, and end by composing for themselves a sort of *lingua franca*, not unlike the jargon talked by the sham Turks in the ceremony in the "Bourgeois gentilhomme," noticed my embarrassment and managed to understand that I wanted to go to the Hôtel de Russie. So he piled my luggage on a *rospousky*, climbed up on it by my side, and we were off. The rospousky is a low vehicle of the most primitive design: two rough poles fitted to four small wheels, — nothing more.

When one has just left the majestic solitude of the sea, the whirl of human activity and the tumult of a

great capital prove somewhat bewildering; it is a dreamy rush through novel sights; it is trying to see everything and seeing nothing.

We soon reached a bridge, which later I learned was the Annunciation Bridge, or more familiarly, Nikolaievsky Bridge. It is reached by two drawbridges, which can be swung to allow of the passage of vessels, and which join again, so that the bridge looks on the river like a Y with shortened upper strokes. At the point of junction of the two drawbridges rises a small and exceedingly rich chapel, the mosaics and gilding of which I could only get a glimpse of as we passed.

At the end of the bridge, the piles of which are of granite and the arches of iron, we turned up the English Quay, Angliskaya Nabérejnaia, which is bordered with palaces with pediments and pillars, or private residences no less splendid, painted in bright colours, with balconies and awnings projecting over the pavement. Most of the houses in Saint Petersburg, like those in London and Berlin, are of brick, coated with cement coloured in various tints, so as to bring out the lines of the building, and to produce a fine decorative effect. As we passed by I admired behind the panes of the lower windows banana trees and other tropical plants,

growing in the warm rooms, which are like hothouses. The English Quay opens out upon a great square, on which Falconnet's Peter the Great sits on his prancing horse, on top of the rock which serves for a pedestal, his arm extended towards the Neva. I recognised the statue at once from Diderot's descriptions and the drawings of it which I had seen. At the back of the square rose the giant mass of St. Isaac's, with its golden dome, its tiara of pillars, and its pillared façade. At the corner of a street at right angles to the quay, winged Victories on porphyry columns held out palms. All these things, of which I got a mere glimpse as, bewildered with novelties, we rapidly drove along, formed a magnificent Babylonian *ensemble.*

Continuing in the same direction, I soon saw the vast Palace of the Admiralty. From a square tower in the form of a temple and ornamented with small pillars, sprang that slender gilt spire with a vessel for a vane, which is seen from afar, and which had excited my curiosity when we were still in the Gulf of Finland. The rows of trees around the building had not yet lost their leaves, although the autumn was already advanced; it was the tenth of October. Farther on, in the centre of another square, rose from a brass

pedestal the Alexander column, a superb monolith of rose granite surmounted by an angel bearing a cross. I had but a bare glimpse of it, for the carriage swung round a corner and entered the Nevsky Prospect, which is to St. Petersburg what the Rue de Rivoli is to Paris, Regent Street to London, the Calle d'Alcala to Madrid, and the Via di Roma Street to Naples; that is, the chief artery of the city, the most frequented and the most animated part.

What most struck me was the immense number of carriages, — and yet it is difficult to surprise a Parisian in that respect, — and particularly the extreme speed of the horses. The drojkis are, as every one knows, a sort of small, low, very light phaeton, which can hold but two persons at most. They go like the wind, driven by coachmen that are as bold as they are skilful. They shaved my rospousky with the swiftness of a swallow, crossed and cut each other out, passed from the wooden pavement to the granite pavement without ever grazing, as far as I could see. Inextricable blocks were cleared as by magic, and every carriage dashed off at full speed, finding room for its wheels where a wheel-barrow could not have got through.

The Nevsky Prospect is at one and the same time the shopping-street and the show-street of St. Petersburg. Shops are rented as high as on the Boulevard des Italiens. It presents the most original mingling of shops, palaces, and churches. On the signs show in gold letters the handsome characters of the Russian alphabet, which has retained some of the Greek letters, the lapidary forms of which lend themselves well to inscriptions.

All this flashed before me like a dream, for the rospousky was going very fast, and before I knew it I was landed at the Hôtel de Russie, the manager of which soundly rated the guide who had installed my lordship in so wretched a vehicle.

The Hôtel de Russie, situated at the corner of the Place Michael, at the end of the Nevsky Prospect, is nearly as large as the Hôtel du Louvre in Paris. Its corridors are longer than many a street, and one can easily tire walking up and down them. The ground-floor is devoted to the great dining-halls, decorated with hothouse plants. In the first hall, on a sort of bar, caviare, herrings, sandwiches of white and of brown bread, cheese of various kinds, bottles of bitters, kummel, and cognac, are used in Russian fashion to

give clients an appetite. The *hors d'œuvres* here are eaten before the meal, and I had travelled too much to think this fashion strange. Every country has its own habits. In Sweden, for instance, they give you your soup at dessert.

At the entrance to this hall were the cloak-rooms, in which people put their overcoats, mufflers, shawls and galoshes. Yet it was not cold, and the thermometer in the open air showed 45 degrees Fahrenheit. These grave precautions in such a mild temperature astonished me, and I could not help looking to see whether the snow had already whitened the roofs. They were, however, coloured only by the faint rosy light of sunset. Yet double windows were put up everywhere, huge piles of wood filled up the court-yards, and every preparation was made to receive winter in real earnest. My room was also hermetically closed. Between the inner and outer sashes was placed sand, in which were stuck little bags of salt, intended to absorb the damp and to prevent the frosting of the panes. Brass registers like letter-boxes were ready to pour out waves of hot air. But the winter was late, and the double windows merely served to keep the room pleasantly warm. There was noth-

ing characteristic about the furniture, save one of those immense sofas which are to be met with everywhere in Russia, and which with their numerous cushions are far more comfortable than the beds, that are mostly very bad.

After dinner I went out without a guide, according to my custom, trusting to my bump of locality to find my way back to the hotel. A watchmaker's dial at one corner and a watch-tower at another served me for landmarks.

The first walk at haphazard through an unknown city which one has long dreamed of is one of the greatest enjoyments of a traveller, and more than compensates for the fatigue of the journey. Is it refining to say that night, with its shadows mingled with lights, its mysteriousness, and its fantastic enlarging of objects, greatly adds to this pleasure? The eye perceives and the imagination completes. Reality does not yet show in over-harsh lines, and the masses loom up large, as in a painting which the artist intends to finish later.

So I turned down the Nevsky Prospect towards the Admiralty, sometimes looking at the passers-by, sometimes at the brightly lighted shops, or into the basements, which reminded me of the Berlin cellars and

the Hamburg beer-tunnels. At every step I saw behind handsome windows artistic arrangements of fruit, — pine-apples, Portugal grapes, lemons, pomegranates, pears, apples, plums, and watermelons. The love of fruit is as wide-spread in Russia as the love of sweets in Germany. Fruit is very expensive, so that it is still more sought after. On the pavement moujiks offered for sale small green apples that looked sour, but yet were readily bought. They were to be found in every corner.

The next morning I went out early in order to see by daylight the picture which I had guessed at before in the faint gleam of twilight and in the darkness. As the Nevsky Prospect practically sums up St. Petersburg, I shall give a somewhat long and detailed description of it, to enable my reader to become at once familiar with the city. I must be forgiven apparently puerile and minute details, for it is these small matters, usually neglected as of no importance and too easily noted, that constitute the difference between one place and another, and apprise the tourist that he is no longer in the Rue Vivienne or in Piccadilly.

Starting from Admiralty Place, the Nevsky Prospect prolongs itself into the far distance until, after making

a slight elbow, it reaches the Alexander Nevsky Convent. The street is broad, like all the streets in St. Petersburg; the centre is paved with rather rough small blocks; the meeting of the two slopes of the paving forms a gutter; on either side a band of wooden pavement runs parallel to the stretch of small granite paving-stones. The pavements are laid with broad flagstones.

The spire of the Admiralty, which resembles the mast of a golden ship planted on the roof of a Greek temple, forms a most happy point of view at the end of the Prospect; the least sunbeam lights it up and delights the eye, whatever the distance at which one may be. Two other neighbouring streets also enjoy this advantage, and show, by a skilful combination of lines, the same gilded spire; but for the present we shall turn our backs upon the Admiralty, and proceed along the Nevsky Prospect to the Anitchkov Bridge; that is, we shall traverse its most animated and frequented portion. The houses here are high and large, and look like palaces or mansions; the oldest recall the old French style, somewhat Italianised, and present a rather majestic mingling of Mansart and Bernini. Corinthian pilasters, cornices, windows with pedi-

ments, brackets, round windows with volutes, doors adorned with masks, ground-floors with boss-work and bearing walls stand out from a background of rose-tinted cement. Others are in the fanciful Louis XV style, with rockery-work, foliage, draperies, torches; while the Greek taste of the Empire presents elsewhere its pillars and triangular fronts, picked out in white on a yellow background. The wholly modern dwellings are in the Anglo-German taste, and seem to be built after the model of the splendid hotels in watering-places, the pictures of which are so attractive to travellers. This *ensemble*, — the details of which should not be studied too closely, for the use of stone alone gives value to ornamentation, by preserving the direct touch of the artist, — this *ensemble* forms an admirable view, which singularly justifies the name Prospect, given to this street as well as to many others in St. Petersburg. Everything has been done for the eye, and the city, created all at once by a will that did not believe in obstacles, sprang complete from the marsh on which it is built, like a stage-setting at the sound of the carpenter's whistle.

If the Nevsky Prospect is beautiful, let me hasten to add that it turns its beauty to account; at once a fash-

ionable and business street, palaces and shops alternate along it. Nowhere, save perhaps in Berne, are sign-boards so luxurious; to such a degree indeed is this the case that the sign-board almost deserves to be reckoned a modern order of architecture, to be added to Vignola's five orders. Golden letters show in thick and thin strokes on azure backgrounds, on black or red panels, are cut out, are applied to the plate glass of the show-windows, are repeated at every door, turn to account the corners of the streets, run around arches, extend along cornices, make use of the projecting *padiezdas* (awnings), slide down the stairs of the basements, and by every means seek to attract the glance of the passer-by. But if one happens not to know Russian, the form of these characters may have no greater meaning than the design of an ornament or a piece of embroidery; side by side is given the translation into French or German. The traveller still fails to understand? In that case the good-natured sign-board forgives him for not knowing any one of these three tongues, and even supposes that he may be wholly ignorant; therefore it represents in lifelike fashion the articles sold in the shop which it adorns. Carved or painted golden bunches of grapes

denote the wine-merchant's; farther on, hams, sausages, ox-tongues, boxes of caviare indicate the provision-dealer's; boots, shoes, galoshes, artlessly represented, say to the feet of those who cannot read, "Enter here and you shall be shod." Gloves crossed speak a tongue intelligible to all. There are also women's cloaks and dresses, some surmounted by a bonnet or a hat, though the artist has not thought it necessary to add a human face. Pianos invite you to try their painted keyboards. All this amuses the idler, and is characteristic.

Numerous canals traverse the city, which is built on twelve islands, like a Northern Venice. Three of these canals cut the Nevsky Prospect without interrupting it, — the Moïka, the Iékatérininiesky, and the Fontanka. The Moïka is spanned by the Police Bridge, the slope of which parallels rather too exactly the arch of the bridge itself, and causes the fast-flying drojkis to slacken speed for a moment. The other two canals are spanned by the Kazan and Anitchkov Bridges. On crossing these before the ice has formed, the glance follows with pleasure the opening made between the houses by these waters enclosed within granite quays, and traversed by boats.

Lessing, the author of "Nathan der Weise," would have enjoyed the Nevsky Prospect, for there his views on religious tolerance are applied in the most liberal fashion: there is scarce a sect which has not its church or its temple on this broad street, in which it may worship with the utmost freedom. On the left in the direction in which I was going, there was the Dutch Church, Saint Peter's Lutheran Church, the Catholic Church of Saint Catherine, the Armenian Church, — to say nothing of the Finnish chapel, and the churches of other reformed sects and denominations in the adjacent streets. On the right, the Russian Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan, another Greek church, and a chapel of the old rite known as Starovertzi or Raskolniki.

All these houses of God, except Our Lady of Kazan, which breaks the line and rounds out upon the vast square its elegant semicircular portico, modelled after the colonnade of St. Peter's at Rome, — mingle familiarly with the dwellings of men; their façades are separated from them only by being slightly set back. They present themselves without any mystery to the pious passer-by, and are recognisable by their particular style of architecture. Each church is

surrounded by extensive grounds, granted by the Czars, and which are now covered with rich buildings rented out by the Church authorities.

Continuing on our way we come to the Douma Tower, a sort of fire-watch-tower like the Seraskierat Tower at Constantinople; at the top is a signalling apparatus on which red or black balls indicate the street in which a fire has broken out. Close by rises the Gostiny Dvor, a great, square building with two stories of galleries, recalling somewhat the Palais-Royal, and which contains shops of all kinds, with luxurious show-windows. Next comes the Imperial Library, with round façade and Ionic columns; then the Anitchkov Palace, which gives its name to the neighbouring bridge, adorned with four bronze horses, held in by equerries, and rearing on granite pedestals.

That is a fair sketch of the Nevsky Prospect; but my reader may object that there is no one in my picture, any more than in the pictures drawn by Turkish draughtsmen. Pray be patient; I am just going to enliven my picture and people it with figures. A writer, less fortunate than a painter, is compelled to present objects one after another.

The crowd is greatest between one and three o'clock in the afternoon. Besides men going about their business and walking rapidly, there are the idlers, whose sole object is to see, to be seen, and to enjoy a little exercise; their coupés or drojkis wait for them at a place agreed upon, or even follow them along the street in case they should desire to get into their carriage.

First must be noted the officers of the Guards, in long overcoats, their rank indicated by a badge on the shoulder, their breasts generally covered with stars, and wearing helmets or caps. Next are the tchinovniks (Government officials), in long frock-coats pleated down the back and at the belt; instead of a hat they wear a dark-coloured cap with a cockade. Young men who are neither soldiers nor officials wear overcoats lined with fur, of a costliness that amazes strangers, and which would stagger our dandies. These overcoats, of very fine cloth, are lined with marten or musk, with beaver collars costing from one hundred to three hundred roubles, according to the quality and softness of the fur, the richness of the colour, and the number of white hairs projecting beyond the level of the fur. An overcoat costing one thousand roubles is not considered extravagant; there

are some which cost more. That is a form of Russian luxury unknown among us. In St. Petersburg one might vary the proverb "Tell me the company you keep, and I will tell you who you are" in this way: "Tell me what furs you wear, and I will tell you what you are worth." A man here is estimated by his overcoat.

But my reader may say to himself as he peruses this description: "What! furs already? At the beginning of October, in exceptionally mild weather, which Northerners ought to think spring-like?" Yes, the Russians are not what foolish people think; it is supposed that, hardened by their climate, they enjoy snow and ice as if they were Polar bears; nothing is farther from the truth. On the contrary, they are exceedingly susceptible to cold, and take, against the slightest fall of temperature, precautions which strangers neglect on their first trip, though they are likely to adopt them later, once they have suffered. When a man lightly dressed, with an olive complexion, full black beard and whiskers, goes by, he is at once recognised as an Italian, — a Southerner, whose blood has not yet cooled. "Put on your light overcoat and galoshes, and wrap your throat with a muffler," I was told. "But the

thermometer is at forty-two!" Never mind that; there is here, as in Madrid, a wind that would not blow out the flame of a candle, but that will kill a man. In Madrid I wore a cloak in hot weather, so there was no reason why I should not put on a winter overcoat in autumn at St. Petersburg: one should trust to the wisdom of nations. An overcoat lined with light fur is therefore a transition garment; with the first fall of snow the pelisse is put on, and never left off until the month of May.

Venetian ladies go about in gondolas only; ladies in St. Petersburg go out in carriages only, — scarcely do they alight to walk a few yards along the Prospect. Their bonnets and dresses are in the Parisian fashion. Blue seems to be the favourite colour; it becomes their fair complexion and golden hair. It is impossible to judge, on the street at least, whether they have fine figures or not; full pelisses of black satin or Scotch plaid cover them from the neck to the heels. Coquetry has to give way here to climatic conditions, and the prettiest feet are unhesitatingly shod with great shoes. Andalusians would rather die than do this, but in St. Petersburg the remark "I do not want to catch cold" is a standing argument. The pelisses are lined

with zibeline marten, Siberian blue fox, and other furs the extravagant price of which we Westerners do not even suspect. Luxuriousness in this respect is incredible, and if the rigour of the climate compels women to wear a shapeless sack, one may be quite sure that it will cost as much as the most splendid dress. After they have gone some fifty yards, the lovely, indolent ladies return into their coupés or their carriages, pay a few visits, and are driven home.

This of course applies to ladies in society, that is to say, the ladies of the nobility ; the others, even though they may be rich, have more humble manners, though their beauty may be as great : rank here is the first consideration. Here are German ladies, the wives of merchants, easily known by their Teutonic type, their air of dreamy gentleness, their clean dresses of simpler stuffs : they wear talmas, basquines, or long-haired cloth cloaks. Here are Frenchwomen in loud dresses, with velvet coats and hats, which cover the whole top of the head, recalling Mabille and the Folies-Nouvelles on the pavement of the Nevsky Prospect.

The truth is that so far one might easily fancy one's self on the Rue Vivienne or on the Boulevard ; but be patient, you shall presently see the Russian types.

Look at that man in a blue kaftan, buttoned on one side of the breast, like a Chinese gown, pleated symmetrically on the hips, and exquisitely clean: he is an artelchtchik or merchant's servant. A flat-crowned cap, with visor coming down on the forehead, completes his costume. He wears his hair and beard parted in the middle like Jesus Christ. He has an honest and intelligent face. He is intrusted with collections, calls, and commissions that require probity.

Just as my reader is commenting on the absence of picturesqueness, there passes a nurse wearing the old national costume. She wears a povoïnik, a sort of diadem-shaped toque of red or blue velvet, with golden embroidery. The povoïnik is either open or closed; worn open it means that the wearer is a girl; closed, that she is a woman. The povoïnik of the nurses has a crown, and the hair falls from below the toque in two long tresses, which hang down the back; when they were girls they wore but a single tress. Under the tunic-like gown of wadded damask, the waist up under the arms, and the skirt very short, is seen an underskirt of cheaper stuff; the tunic is red or blue, like the povoïnik, and bordered with a broad golden galloon. The costume, essentially Russian, is stylish

and aristocratic when worn by a handsome woman. The gala full-dress, worn at Court entertainments, is on this model, and, covered with gold, studded with diamonds, contributes not a little to the splendour of a feast.

In Spain it is also the proper thing to have nurses wearing the *pasiega* costume, and I used to admire the handsome peasant-women on the Prado or the Calle d'Alcala, with their black velvet jackets and gold-banded scarlet skirts. It seems as though civilisation, feeling the national characteristics vanishing, seeks to imprint the remembrance of them on the children, by bringing from the far countryside a woman in the old costume, to represent the motherland.

As I am talking of nurses, I suppose I may talk of children; the transition is a natural one. The Russian babies are very pretty, with their blue kaftans, and their flat hats like the *sombrero calañès*, decorated with a peacock's feather.

On the pavements are always numbers of dvorniks, or janitors, busily sweeping in summer, and cleaning away the ice and snow in winter. They are rarely in a lodge, even, if they have a lodge in our Parisian meaning of the word. They sit up all night, are

unacquainted with the "cordon," and open the door themselves at the first call, — for they actually concede, strange to say, that a janitor ought to open the door at three in the morning just as readily as at three in the afternoon. They sleep anywhere, and never undress. They wear a blue shirt over their rather full trousers and heavy boots, a costume which they exchange at the first touch of cold for a sheepskin coat, with the wool inside.

From time to time a boy, draped around the waist with an apron like a loin-cloth, fastened by a string, leaves an artisan's shop, and crosses the street rapidly, to enter a house or shop at some distance; it is an apprentice, sent on a message by his master.

The picture would not be complete if I did not introduce into it some dozens of moujiks in their tulupes, shining with filth and grease, — selling apples or cakes, carrying provisions in *karzines* (baskets made of fir-wood shavings), mending the wooden pavement, or stepping together in groups of four to six, carrying on their heads a piano, a table, or a sofa.

There are very few moujik women to be seen, either because they remain in the country upon their masters' estates or because they are busy at home with domestic

affairs. Such of them as are to be occasionally met with have nothing characteristic about them: on their heads they wear a handkerchief which is tied under their chin and frames in their face; a wadded overcoat of common stuff, of neutral colour and doubtful cleanliness, falls half way to their ankles, and below it show a chintz skirt, thick felt stockings, and wooden clogs. They are not very pretty, but have a sad, soft look. No flash of envy lights up their pale eyes at the sight of a beautiful well-dressed lady, and coquetry seems to be unknown to them. They accept their inferiority, — a thing no woman in France ever does, however lowly her condition may be.

Indeed, one is struck by the proportionately small number of women in the streets of St. Petersburg; as in the East, men alone seem to have the privilege of going out. It is the contrary in Germany, where the feminine population is always in the streets.

So far I have put my figures on the pavement only, yet the street itself does not present a less animated and lively spectacle, for along it flows an incessant stream of carriages, going at full speed, and it is no less perilous to cross the Prospect than to cross the Boulevard between Rue Drouot and Rue Richelieu. People

do not walk much in St. Petersburg, and take a drojki even to go a few steps. Carriages here are considered not as luxuries, but as necessaries; small dealers, poorly paid employees, economise in many ways in order to have a karéta, a drojki, or a sleigh. It is somewhat dishonourable to go on foot, — a carriageless Russian is like a horseless Arab; one doubts whether he is a nobleman, and he may be taken for a mechtchanine or serf.

The drojki is the national carriage *par excellence*. There is nothing like it in any country, and it therefore deserves a special description. There is one now close by the pavement, waiting for its owner, who is visiting in some house or another; it seems to be posing purposely for us. It is a fashionable drojki, belonging to a young nobleman fond of a stylish equipage. The drojki is a very small, low, four-wheeled, open carriage; the hind wheels are no larger than the front wheels of the victorias; the front wheels are the size of those of a wheel-barrow. Four round springs support the body, which is divided into two parts, one for the coachman, the other for the owner; the latter part is round, and in the elegant drojkis, called "sulkies," can seat but a single person; in others there are two

seats, but so narrow that one is forced to put one's arm around the other passenger, whether a lady or a gentleman. On either side two varnished-leather mud-guards curve over the wheels, and meeting on the side of the carriage, which has no door, form a step a few inches from the ground. Under the driver's seat is the king-bolt. There are no patent axle-boxes on the wheels, for a reason that I shall presently state when describing the manner in which the drojki is fitted. The colour of the carriage does not vary greatly: it is either dark-green, relieved with light-blue lines, or Russian green, with pale-green lines, but whatever may be the colour chosen, it is always dark. The seat is upholstered in morocco or dark cloth; a Persian or moquette carpet is placed under the feet. The drojkis do not carry lights, and they fly along at night without having their two stars on their frontlets. It is the business of the pedestrian to look out for himself, and that of the coachman to call, "Look out!" Nothing can be prettier, daintier, or lighter than this fairy equipage, which might be carried off under one's arm: it looks as if it had been turned out by Queen Mab's carriage-builder.

Harnessed to this nut-shell, which would not prevent its jumping a fence, stamps impatiently and nervously

a splendid horse, which may have cost six thousand roubles, — a horse of the famous Orloff breed, with silvery gray coat, a high-stepper, long maned, and with a silvery tail that looks as if it were spangled with shining mica. It paws and throws its head up and down, digs, scratches the stones with its hoofs, and is held in with difficulty by a robust coachman. It stands nude between the shafts, and no complication of harness prevents one admiring its beauty: a few light leather cords, not more than a centimetre in length, fastened by small silver or gilt ornaments, play upon its back without troubling it, covering it, or concealing in any way the proportions of its form. The cheek-straps are covered with small metallic scales, and the heavy blinkers, black shutters that conceal the finest part of a horse, namely, its fire-dilated eye, are not used. Two silver chains are gracefully crossed over the forehead. The snaffle is covered with leather, to prevent the cold of the steel spoiling the delicacy of the handling, for a mere thread is sufficient to guide the noble animal. A collar, very light and supple, is the only portion of the harness by which the horse is fastened to the carriage, for Russian harness does not include traces. The shafts are fastened directly to the

collar by straps rolled and twisted on themselves several times, but without buckles, rings, or metal fastenings of any kind. At the point where the shafts and collar meet, the same straps fasten a yoke of flexible wood, that curves above the horse's withers like the handle of a basket, the ends of which are drawn together; this yoke, called *douga*, bent a little backwards, and to which the check-strap is fastened, serves to keep the collar and the shafts from chafing the horse.

The shafts are not fastened to the fore-body of the drojki, but to the axle of the fore-wheels, which projects beyond the hub, through a thin piece of wood fastened by a hook on the outside. For the sake of greater solidity, a trace placed outside is connected with the straps and collar. This mode of harnessing makes the fore-body turn easily, the traction acting upon the ends of the axle as on a lever. This is no doubt a very minute description, but vague descriptions do not convey accurate ideas, and perhaps the Parisian and London sportsman would not be sorry to know how a Saint Petersburg sportsman's drojki is made and harnessed.

There! I have not spoken of the coachman. The Russian coachman is characteristic, full of local colour;

he wears a low-crowned hat, swelling above, the brim of which, turned up on either side, is inclined on the forehead and on the back of the neck, and a long blue or green kaftan, fastened under the left arm by five silver hooks or buttons, pleated on the hips, and fastened round the waist by a Circassian belt woven with gold. The man's muscular neck shows above his cravat; over his breast flows his full beard, and with his arms extended, holding a rein in each hand, he has, I must own, a triumphant and proud mien. He is indeed the coachman for such an equipage. The stouter he is, the higher are his wages; if he has entered an establishment thin, he asks for an increase of wages as he grows stouter.

As people drive with both hands the use of the whip is unknown; the horses are urged or quieted down by the sound of the voice. Like the Spanish muleteers the Russians address compliments or insults to their animals, sometimes using charming and tender diminutives, sometimes horribly picturesque insults, which modern modesty forbids my repeating. If the animal slackens speed or stumbles, a touch of the reins on the quarters is sufficient to excite it or pull it up. Coachmen warn you to get out of the way by calling out:

"*Béréguiss! Béréguiss!*" If you do not obey quickly enough, they repeat forcibly: "Béréguiss! Béréguiss, —sta . . . eh!" The coachmen of great houses make a point of never raising their voices.

Now our young nobleman has got back into his carriage; the horse goes off at a lively trot, stepping so high that its knees touch its nostrils; it looks as if it were dancing, but this stylish gait in no wise diminishes its speed.

Sometimes another horse is harnessed to the drojki; it is called *pristiajka*, or off horse; it is held in by a single outer rein, and gallops while its companion trots; the difficulty lies in keeping up similar gaits at an even pace. This horse, which looks as if it were prancing along and accompanying its comrade for the fun of the thing, has a gay, free, graceful look, the equal of which is not to be seen anywhere else.

Public drojkis are exactly similar, save that their lines are not so elegant; they are not so highly finished, and the painting is not so good. They are driven by coachmen wearing a more or less clean blue kaftan; they carry a number stamped on a brass plate, hung from a leather cord and usually thrown behind the back, so that the passenger while driving along shall

have the number before him and not forget it. The harness is the same, and though the little Ukraine horse is not so highly bred, it nevertheless goes at a good speed. There is also the long drojki, which is older and more national; it is simply a bench covered with cloth, and placed on four wheels; one has either to sit astride on it or sidewise as on a lady's saddle. The drojkis wander about here and there, or stand at the corners of the streets or squares, in front of wooden troughs supported on open-work supports, that contain oats or hay for the horses. At any hour of the day or night, at any place in St. Petersburg, one need only call out, "*Izvochtchik!*" two or three times, and forthwith there dashes up a small carriage, which has come Heaven knows whence.

The coupés, berlins, and barouches that continually drive up and down the Prospect, are in no wise distinctive. Most of them seem to come from England or Vienna; they are drawn by superb horses, and always go at a great pace. The coachmen wear kaftans, and sometimes by their side is seated a sort of soldier, wearing a brass helmet topped by a ball instead of an aigrette like that of the regulars; these men are dressed in gray cloaks, the collars of which are trimmed with

red or blue bands, indicating the rank of their master — whether a general or a colonel. The right of sporting a footman in hunting livery is confined to the embassies. This carriage, drawn by four horses, with postilion in old-fashioned livery, holding in his hand a long, straight riding-whip, is the Metropolitan's carriage, and when it goes by everybody bows.

Amid the rush of the carriages are to be seen very primitive chariots; for the wildest rusticity rubs elbows with the highest civilisation, — a frequent contrast in Russia. Rospouskys, consisting of two joists placed on axles, and the wheels of which are fastened by pieces of wood, that press against the hubs and curve up to the sides of the rough vehicle, — shave the swiftly speeding, dazzling barouche. The mode of harnessing is the same as with the drojki, only a larger yoke, quaintly painted, takes the place of the light, gracefully curved douga; ropes replace the fine leather thongs, and a moujik wearing a tulupe or a round frock, squats down among the bundles and bales. As for the horse, whose coat has never been groomed, it shakes as it goes its tangled mane that hangs almost to the ground. These vehicles are used for moving purposes; planks are placed upon them to give more

room, and the furniture travels with its legs in the air, fastened down with cords. Farther on, a hay-cart seems to be going along of itself, dragged by a poor brute which it almost entirely covers up. A barrel full of water progresses slowly in the same fashion. A telega goes by at full speed, not caring whether its springless condition jolts the officials it carries. Whither is it bound? To a point five or six hundred versts away; farther, perhaps, even to the uttermost limits of the Empire, to the Caucasus or Thibet. It is no matter, but one thing is certain, that the light cart, that is the best name for it, will always be driven at top speed; provided the two fore-wheels get there with the front seat, that will be sufficient.

Now look at this dray, which with its boarded bottom and sides looks like a great trough on wheels; there is dragging behind it a pole separating, like the partition of a loose box, the two horses which it tows and which do not need to be held in hand by attendants, — nothing could be more simple and convenient.

There are not to be seen in St. Petersburg any of those heavy drays drawn by five or six elephantine horses, lashed by a brutal driver; here, horses, which are more spirited than robust, are not expected to draw

heavy loads,—all weighty objects which can be divided, are distributed among several teams, instead of being heaped up on a single one as with us. These teams go together, and form caravans that recall in the centre of the city the travelling methods of the desert. Horsemen are rare, unless they happen to be mounted guardsmen or Cossack orderlies.

Every civilised city is bound to have omnibuses. A few travel in and about the Nevsky Prospect, bound to distant quarters; they are drawn by three horses, but people usually prefer drojkis, which do not cost much more, and which take you wherever you please; the long drojki costs fifteen kopecks a trip, the round drojki twenty. It is not dear, and a man must either be very poor or miserly to walk.

Twilight is coming on; passers-by are hastening to dinner, the carriages are scattering, and on the watch-tower rises the luminous ball which gives the signal for lighting the gas lamps. Let us go home.

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

WINTER — THE NEVA

DURING the past few days the temperature has grown markedly colder; every night there has been a white frost, and a northeast wind has swept away the last red leaves of the trees on Admiralty Square. The winter, although late for this climate, has started from the Pole, and its approach is marked by the shivering of nature. Nervous people experience that curious uneasiness caused in delicate organizations by coming snow. The izvochtchiks, who have no nerves, it is true, but on the other hand possess an infallible meteorological instinct like animals, — look up at the sky of a uniform yellowish gray, and joyously make their sleighs ready. The snow, however, has not come, and people are exchanging critical remarks about the temperature, of a very different description from the meteorological commonplaces of the Philistines of other countries. In St. Petersburg people complain that the weather is not cold enough, and when they look at the thermometer they are apt to say: "What!

only twenty-four to twenty-six degrees of cold? There is no doubt that the climate is changing." The old people will tell you of the lovely winters when they enjoyed a cold of ten to twenty below zero, beginning with the month of October, and lasting until the month of May.

One morning, however, as I raised my blind, I saw through the double windows, moist with the night air, a roof dazzlingly white, that stood out against the pale-blue sky, in which the rising sun was gilding a few rosy clouds and wisps of yellow smoke. The architectural lines of the palace opposite my house were picked out with silver lines like those of drawings on tinted paper which are brought out by touches of white, and over the ground was spread, like a lining of cotton, a thick layer of virgin snow, yet unmarked save by the starry feet of pigeons, as numerous in St. Petersburg as in Constantinople or Venice. A flock of these birds, spotting the immaculately white background with its blue-gray tints, was hopping about, flapping its wings, and apparently awaiting, more impatiently than usual, the seeds thrown them every morning, with Brahmin-like charity, by the provision-dealer in the basement; for although the snow looks like a table-cloth, the birds

do not find a meal on it. The pigeons were hungry; so great was their joy when the dealer at last opened the door; the winged flock swooped eagerly at him, and he disappeared for a moment in a cloud of feathers. A few handfuls of grain thrown at a distance partially restored his liberty, and he smiled, as he stood on his threshold, at seeing his little friends eating with joyous avidity, and sending the snow flying right and left. Of course a few uninvited sparrows, like shameless parasites, profited by this good cheer, and did not allow the crumbs of the feast to fall to the ground. After all, people must live.

The city was awaking. Moujiks were going to market, with their baskets of fir shavings on their heads, plunging their big boots into the yet untrodden snow, and making tracks like those of an elephant. A few women, with handkerchiefs tied under their chins, and wrapped up in quilted overcoats like counterpanes, crossed the street with a lighter step, embroidering with silvery mica the bottoms of their skirts. Gentlemen, wearing long coats, their collars turned up above their ears, walked along briskly, on their way to their offices. And suddenly appeared the first sleigh, driven by Winter in person, under the figure of an izvochtchik, who wore

a square, red velvet cap trimmed with fur, a blue kaftan lined with sheepskin, and over his knees an old bear-skin robe. While waiting for a customer he was lolling on the front seat of his sleigh, driving, over his own seat, with big mittens on his hands, his little Kazan horse, whose long mane almost swept the snow. Never since my arrival in St. Petersburg had I had so clear a feeling that I was in Russia: it was like a sudden revelation, and I immediately understood many things which till then had remained obscure.

As soon as I saw the snow I dressed as fast as I could; at the sight of the sleigh I put on my overcoat and my galoshes, and a moment later I was in the street uttering the customary cry: "Izvochtchik! Izvochtchik!" The sleigh drove up to the curb, the izvochtchik straddled his seat, and I inserted myself into the carriage, the bottom of which was filled with hay, — carefully crossing the skirts of my pelisse one over the other, and pulling the fur robe well over myself. The construction of the sleigh is very simple: it consists of two runners or skates of polished iron, the forward part of which is curved upward like a Chinese shoe; on these two runners a light iron armature supports the driver's seat and the box in which the passenger

takes his place; the box is usually painted mahogany colour. The dash-board, which curves outwards like a swan's breast, gives gracefulness to the sleigh, and protects the izvochtchik from the pieces of snow which fly past the rapid turn-out like silvery foam. The shafts are fastened to the collar, as is the case with the drojki, and draw from the runners. The whole thing is very light and goes like the wind, especially when the snow has been hardened by the frost, and the track is beaten down.

We are off for the Anitchkov Bridge, at the very end of the Nevsky Prospect; I had thought of going there simply because it was a long drive, for at this early hour of the morning I did not care to inspect the four bronze horses that decorate it. Besides, I was very glad to see the Prospect snow-powdered and in its full winter dress. It is amazing how much it is improved by it. An endless silver band unrolled as far as the eye could reach, between the double lines of palaces, mansions, and churches, every building itself brought out by white touches, produces a really wonderful effect. The rose, yellow, buff, mouse-gray colours of the houses, which are apt to appear somewhat strange under ordinary conditions, have a very harmonious

tone when thus relieved by dazzling lines and sparkling spangles. The Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan, which we passed, was metamorphosed, greatly to its advantage; on its Italian cupola there now rested a Russian snow-cap; the cornices and the Corinthian capitals were outlined in pure white; on the terrace of its semicircular colonnade there was a balustrade of massive silver, like that which adorns the *Ikonostas;* the steps leading to the porch were covered with a carpet of ermine, fine, soft, and splendid enough for a Czarina to walk upon.

The statues of Barclay de Tolly and Kutusov seemed to feel glad, as they stood on their pedestals, that the sculptor, Orlovski, knowing what the climate was, had not dressed them in Roman fashion, but had on the contrary provided them with warm bronze mantles. Unfortunately, the artist had not given them hats, and the snow had powdered their heads with its cold powder *à la maréchale.*

Near Our Lady of Kazan the Iékaterininiesky Canal crosses the Prospect under a bridge. It was frozen all over, and the snow was drifted at the corners of the quay and the steps of the stairs. A single night had sufficed to freeze up everything. The ice-floes which the Neva had been carrying down for some days past,

had stopped and formed a transparent mould around the hulls of the boats laid up in winter-quarters.

Before the doors of the houses dvorniks, armed with broad shovels, were cleaning the pavement and heaping up the snow on the street. Sleighs came from all directions, and strange to say, in one night the drojkis, so numerous the day before, had wholly disappeared, — not a single vehicle of that kind was to be met with in the streets: it seemed as if Russia had in one night returned to the most primitive civilisation and had not yet invented wheels. Rospouskys, telegas, every sort of carriage was now on runners. The moujiks drew their baskets upon small sledges; their low-crowned, vase-like hats had vanished, and had been replaced by velvet caps.

When the track is well beaten down, and the frost has packed the snow, there is an immense saving in power obtained by the use of sleighs: a horse can draw, without difficulty, and with twice the speed, three times the weight it could draw under ordinary conditions. In Russia, snow is for six months of the year a universal railway, the white lines of which extend in every direction, and enable one to go wherever one pleases. The silvery road has the great advantage

of costing nothing at all per verst or kilometre, a most economical item, which the most skilful engineers will never manage; this may be the reason why there are only two or three railways across the immense territory of Russia.

I returned home very much pleased with my drive. After having breakfasted, and smoked a cigar, — a delightful sensation in St. Petersburg, where one is not allowed to smoke in the street under penalty of being fined one rouble, — I walked along the Neva to enjoy the change of scenery. The great river, which I had seen a few days before spreading out its broad waters, rippling with perpetual fluctuations, shimmering in ever-changing rays of light, traversed by the incessant coming and going of ships, boats, steamers, and other craft, and rolling towards the Gulf of Finland, though itself as vast as a gulf, — had completely changed its appearance: the immobility of death had succeeded the liveliest animation, the snow lay thick over the floes, now joined together, and between the granite quays the white valley, from which arose here and there the black points and masts above the half-buried vessels, was prolonged as far as the eye could see. Poles and branches of fir pointed the places cut in the ice for the purpose

of drawing water, and indicated the road which could be safely followed from one bank to the other; for already foot passengers were crossing, and the plank slopes were being laid for the sleighs and carriages, though they were still barred to traffic by wooden horses, the ice not being thick enough yet.

In order to have a better general view, I went to the Annunciation Bridge, more generally known as the Nicolaievsky Môst, which I mentioned when describing my arrival in St. Petersburg. This time I had leisure to examine carefully the lovely chapel erected in honour of St. Nicholas the Thaumaturgist, at the point of junction of the two drawbridges. It is a charming little building, in Russo-Byzantine style, which is so appropriate to the Orthodox-Greek ritual, and which I should like to see more generally adopted in Russia. It is of blue granite, flanked at each corner with a pillar, with composite capital; the pillar is circled at the centre by a bracelet, and striated with flutings that are not straight but broken at the top and at the bottom; a double base supports the pillar; the arcade is cut in facets; three bays are cut out of three of the sides of the building, the back wall of which is resplendent with a mosaic in precious stones, represent-

ing the holy patron of the chapel, draped in a dalmatic, a golden nimbus on his head, an open book in his hand, and surrounded by celestial figures in adoration. Richly wrought iron-work balconies close the two side arcades. The arch of the façade, reached by a staircase, gives access to the chapel. The cornice, covered with inscriptions in Slavonic characters, punctuated with stars, is topped by a series of heart-shaped ornaments, placed point up, which alternate with dog's-tooth ornaments. The roof, of pyramidion shape, with ridge line mouldings, is covered with golden scales; on its point is placed one of those swelling Muscovite belfries, which I cannot compare to anything better than tulip bulbs covered with gold, and ending in a Greek cross, the foot of which springs from the crescent that rests upon the ball. I am very fond of those gilded roofs, especially when the snow covers them with its silvery filings and gives them an air of old silver-gilt with half the gilding worn off; the tones then are incredibly delicate and wondrous, and the effects produced are absolutely unknown elsewhere.

A lamp burns night and day before the ikon. When izvochtchiks pass near the chapel they take their reins in one hand, and with the other raise their cap and

make the sign of the cross. Moujiks prostrate themselves on the snow. Soldiers and officers repeat a prayer with an air of ecstasy, motionless, bare-headed, — a meritorious devotion indeed when the thermometer marks from five to ten above zero. Women climb the steps and kiss the feet of the ikon, after many genuflexions. Nor, as might be supposed, do they belong only to the lower classes: the people of the upper classes do the same; no one crosses the bridge without some sign of respect — a bow at the very least — to the saint which protects it. And the kopecks fall in quantities in the two alms-boxes placed on either side the chapel.

But let us return to the Neva. On the right, if one looks towards the city one sees, somewhat back of the Angliskaya Nabérejnaia (the English Quay), the five-pointed steeples of the Guards' Church, the gilding slightly glazed with white; farther on, the dome of St. Isaac's, like the diamond-studded mitre of one of the Magi kings, the brilliant spire of the Admiralty, and the corner of the Winter Palace. On the left, still looking from seaward, the sky-line does not break the horizon with so many golden dentelations; there are fewer churches on this side, and they are farther back

within the Vassily Ostrov, as this quarter of the city is called. Still, the palaces and mansions that border the quay present monumental lines, which the snow brings out most happily. On the hither side of the Exchange Bridge, rises the Academy of Fine Arts, a great palace in the classical taste, containing a round court within its square mass. From the palace the river is reached by a colossal staircase adorned with two great human-headed Egyptian sphinxes, surprised at bearing upon their rose granite quarters housings of snow that make them shiver. The Roumiantzov Obelisk rises in the centre of the square.

If, crossing by the Exchange Bridge, one returns to the other bank, and passing by the Winter Palace and the Hermitage, one goes as far as the Marble Palace, a little way before reaching the Troïtsky Bridge, and then looks back, there is a new view well worth gazing upon. The river divides into two arms which form the Great and the Lesser Neva, and surround the island, the up-stream point of which is decorated with grandiose architectural effect.

At each corner of the esplanade which ends the island on this side, rises a sort of lighthouse or rather a rostral column of rose granite, with bronze prows

and anchors, surmounted by brazen tripods or lights; the whole placed upon a pedestal against which lean seated statues. Between these two very effective columns shows the Exchange, which, as with us, is a distant imitation of the Parthenon, a parallelogram surrounded by pillars; only they are Doric instead of Corinthian, and the main portion of the building rises above the attic of the surrounding colonnade, presenting a triangular gable like a Greek pediment, in which is cut a broad, arched window, half filled up by a group of sculpture placed upon the corners of the portico. On the right and left the University and the Custom-House are placed symmetrically; these buildings are of regular and simple architecture. The two light-houses, with their gigantic and monumental silhouettes, very effectively relieve the somewhat cold, classical lines of the buildings. In the arm of the Lesser Neva are massed, for wintering, the ships and boats, the masts of which, stripped of their rigging, cut the background with slender lines. Now to this brief sketch on pearl-gray paper, add a few touches of brilliant white, and you will have a pretty good view for your album.

To-day I shall not go farther; it is anything but warm on the quays and bridges, where blows a wind

that comes straight from the Pole. Every one walks rapidly. The two lions that stand at the landing-place of the Imperial palace seem to be frost-bitten, and to find it difficult to hold the ball placed under their paw.

The next day private sleighs and open carriages turned the Angliskaya Nabérejnaia and the Nevsky Prospect into a sort of Longchamps. It seems strange, in a city where five below zero is not an uncommon temperature, that people should use closed carriages so little; it is only as a last resort that Russians use karétas, and yet they are very sensitive to cold; but the fur coat is a defence against the cold, — once they have it on they laugh at a temperature at which mercury freezes. They do not generally put on more than one sleeve, and hold the coat carefully closed by inserting the hand in a small pocket on the inside front. It is quite an art to wear a pelisse properly, and it is not acquired at once; the Russian imperceptibly gives it play, crosses it, doubles it, draws it around his body like a child's swaddling-clothes or a mummy's bandages. The furs preserve for several hours the temperature of the anteroom in which they have been hung, and completely keep off the outer air. With the pelisse on, you are as warm when outside as when

in the house, and if giving up the tempting elegance of a hat, you put on a wadded cap or beaver-fur cap, you can pull up your collar, the fur of which is then inside; the back of your neck, your head, and your ears are protected, — your nose alone, sticking out between the two furry walls, is exposed to the rigour of the weather; but if it begins to turn white, people are kind enough to warn you of it, and by rubbing it with a handful of snow you soon restore its natural red colour. These accidents happen only in exceptionally hard winters. Old dandies, rigid followers of London and Paris fashions, refusing to wear caps, have made especially for them hats with no brim behind, and a mere visor in front; for it is impossible to keep one's collar turned down: the cold north wind would soon make the uncovered neck feel its icy teeth, as disagreeable as the contact of steel to the neck of the victim.

The most delicate women are not afraid to drive about in carriages, and to breathe for an hour that icy but healthy and bracing air, that refreshes the lungs oppressed by the hothouse temperature of the dwellings. All that can be seen of them is their faces, made rosy by the cold; the rest of their person is one mass of pelisses and furs, in which it would be difficult to make

out a human shape. Over their laps they spread great robes of white or black bearskin trimmed with scarlet; the carriage is thus made to resemble a boat filled with furs, from which emerge a few smiling faces.

Having confounded the Dutch and Russian sleighs, I had imagined something very different from the latter. It is in Holland that are seen upon the frozen canals sleighs in fantastic shapes of swans, dragons, or sea-shells, fluted, grooved, gilded and painted by Hondekoeter or de Vost, the panels of which have been carefully preserved. They are drawn by horses, adorned with tufts, plumes, and bells, but more generally they are pushed by a skater. The Russian sleigh is no plaything, no mere matter of luxury and amusement, used but for a few weeks; it is, on the contrary, a vehicle in daily use and of the highest utility. Nothing has been changed in the necessary form, and the private sleigh is exactly like the izvochtchik's, so far as the main lines go; only, the runners are of brighter steel, and have a more graceful curve. The body of the sleigh is of mahogany or cane-work; the seats are upholstered in morocco; the dash-board is of varnished leather. A fur muff for the feet takes the place of hay; a costly robe that of the moth-eaten robe; the

details are better looked after and finer; that is the sole difference. Luxury exhibits itself in the dress of the coachmen, the beauty of the horses, and the speed of the equipage. As with the drojki, a second or off horse is often harnessed to the sleigh.

But the finest thing in this way is the troïka, a peculiarly Russian vehicle, full of local colour, and exceedingly picturesque. It is a large sleigh holding four people seated opposite each other, besides the coachman, and drawn by three horses. The centre horse, placed between the shafts, has a collar, and curved douga above the withers; the two others are harnessed to the sleigh by an outer trace only, and a loose strap fastens them to the collar of the shaft horse; four reins are sufficient to drive the three animals, for the two outer horses are driven each with a single outside rein. It is a beautiful thing to see a troïka fly along the Nevsky Prospect or Admiralty Square at the hour for the promenade. The shaft horse trots, stepping straight ahead; the two other horses gallop, spreading out like a fan; one of them must seem fiery, spirited, untameable, must throw up its head, pretend to shy and to kick, — that is the furious one; the other must shake its mane, bringing

its head to its breast, curvet, prance, touch its knees with its nose, rear prettily, spring to right or left according as its high spirits and its caprices impel it, — that is the coquettish one. These three noble steeds, with their cheek-straps, metal chains, their harness as light as ribbons, on which sparkle here and there, like spangles, delicate gold ornaments, — recall those equipages of antiquity that draw upon triumphal arches bronze cars to which they are not fastened. They seem to play and gambol in front of the troïka, moved merely by their own desire. The middle horse alone seems somewhat serious, like a quiet friend between two lively companions. Of course it is not easy to maintain this apparent disorder, when the speed is great, and when each animal has its own gait : — sometimes the furious one plays its part in real earnest, and the coquettish one rolls in the snow, so that it takes a consummately skilful coachman to drive a troïka. It is exciting sport, and I am surprised that no gentleman rider in London or Paris has thought of copying it; it is true that snow does not last long enough in England and in France.

As the sleighing remained good, after a few days coupés, berlins, and landaus appeared on runners; these carriages have a curious look after the wheels

are taken off. The sleigh itself is infinitely more graceful and characteristic.

When I saw the pelisses, the sleighs, the troïkas, and carriages, on runners, and the thermometer going down every moment one or two degrees more, I supposed that winter had fairly set in, but the wise old heads, accustomed to the climate, nodded sceptically, and said, "No, it is not winter yet." And indeed it was not winter, the real winter, the Russian and arctic winter, as I found out a little later.

WINTER

WINTER this year has broken loose from Russian traditions, and has proved as capricious as a Parisian winter: one day the polar winds freeze its nose and turn its cheeks a waxen colour; the next day the southwest wind melts its icy mantle, that drops away in the form of rain. Sparkling snow is followed by dirty snow; the track, creaking under the runners of the sleigh like marble dust, turns into a filthy mess, worse than the macadam on the boulevards; or else, in the course of a single night, the hairlike lines of spirits fall ten or twelve degrees in the thermometer; a fresh white coat covers the roofs, and the drojkis disappear. When the temperature falls to between five and ten below, winter becomes characteristic and poetical, and is as rich in effects as the most gorgeous summer; but up to this time it has lacked painters and poets.

For a few days past we have had genuine Russian cold, and I purpose to note some of its aspects, for,

when it reaches that point, cold becomes visible, and one can see it clearly, without feeling it, through the double windows of a warm room. The sky becomes clear and of a blue utterly unlike the Southern blue: it is a steely, icy blue, with a rare and delicate tone that no painter, not even Aïvasovsky, has yet reproduced. The brilliant light gives out no heat, and the icy sun colours the cheeks of a few rosy clouds; the diamond-like snow sparkles; it resembles Parian marble, and its whiteness increases when the frost hardens it. The trees, covered with frost crystals, look like immense quicksilver ramifications or the metallic flowers in a fairy garden.

Put on your pelisse, turn up the collar, pull your fur cap down to your eyes, and hail the first izvochtchik that passes; he will hasten to you and draw up his sleigh by the pavement; however young he may be, it is certain his beard will be quite white, — his breath condensing in icicles around his face, purple with cold, has given him a patriarchal beard; his stiff hair strikes against his cheek-bones like frozen serpents, and the robe he spreads over your knees is strewn with millions of tiny white pearls.

You are off: the sharp, penetrating, icy, but healthy wind strikes you in the face; the horse, heated by its

own speed, breathes forth jets of smoke, like a dragon of fable, and from its perspiring sides rises a mist that follows it. As you drive along you see the horses of other izvochtchiks before their mangers; the perspiration has frozen on their bodies, they are frosted and as it were caught in a glassy crust of ice. When they start again the thin coating breaks, falls off, and melts, and is renewed as soon as they stop. These changes would kill an English horse in a week, but in no wise impair the health of these small steeds, which are thoroughly hardened to cold. In spite of the rigour of the season, it is costly horses only that are provided with rugs; instead of the caparisons and blankets with coats of arms at the corners, used to wrap up blood horses in France and England, here a Persian or Smyrna carpet of brilliant colours is thrown upon the smoking quarters of thoroughbreds.

The windows of the karétas that fly along, placed on runners, are covered with an opaque layer of frost, forming quicksilver blinds, drawn by winter; they prevent your being seen, but also prevent your seeing out. If Love did not shiver in such temperature, it would find the karétas of St. Petersburg as mysteriously useful as Venetian gondolas. The carriages drive across the

Neva; the ice, two or three feet thick, in spite of a few passing thaws which have merely melted the snow, will not move until spring, at the time of the great shove. It is thick enough to support heavy wains, and even artillery. Small fir trees mark the road to be followed and the places to be avoided. At certain spots the ice has been cut through to allow the water, which still flows under the crystal floor, to be drawn up. The water, the temperature of which is higher than that of the outer air, smokes out of these openings like a boiling caldron; but this is merely relative, and it would not be wise to trust to its tepidity.

It is interesting when one passes along the Angliskaya Nabérejnaia, or when one walks on the Neva, to watch the fish drawn from the fishermen's stores, for sale in the city: when they are scooped out of the box and thrown quivering upon the deck of the vessel, they squirm two or three times, but soon stop, stiffened, and as it were imprisoned in a transparent casing: the water which wetted them has suddenly frozen around them.

During the great cold, things freeze with surprising rapidity: if you put a bottle of champagne between your two windows, it will be iced in a few moments more thoroughly than in any ice-pail.

Yet the thermometer has fallen to three or four below zero only, and it is not the glorious cold, the great cold which usually comes about Epiphany. The Russians are complaining of the mildness of the winter, and say that the climate is changing. Yet the chilly Parisian cannot help feeling an arctic and polar impression when, on leaving the Opera, he sees in the beautiful cold moonlight, on the great square white with snow, a line of private carriages and coachmen powdered with frost crystals, the horses fringed with silver, the pale lights quivering through the frosted lamps; and it is with the fear of being frozen on the road that he gets into his sleigh; but his pelisse is impregnated with heat, and maintains a pleasant atmosphere around him. If he leaves the Malaïa Morskaïa or the Nevsky Prospect in the direction that compels him to pass St. Isaac's, let him not forget to cast a glance at the church: pure white lines mark the great divisions of the building; and on the dome, showing faint in the darkness, there shines but a single spot on the most convex point, exactly opposite the moon, which seems to be looking at itself within that golden mirror. That luminous point is so intensely brilliant that it might be mistaken for a lighted lamp; the whole brilliancy of the dazzling dome is

concentrated there. It is absolutely magical, and nothing can be finer than that great temple of gold, bronze, and granite, placed upon a spotless ermine carpet, in the blue effulgence of the winter's moon.

Is it for the purpose of building an Ice Palace, as during the famous winter of 1740, that these long lines of sleighs are transporting huge blocks of water frozen into the shape of dressed stone, transparent as diamonds, and fitted to form the diaphanous walls of a temple dedicated to the mysterious Genius of the Pole? Not at all, — it is merely the ice-houses that are being filled; the needs of the next summer cause to be cut on the Neva, at the most favourable season, those huge glass-like blocks with sapphire reflections, of which each sleigh carries a single one. The drivers sit down on these blocks or lean on them as on cushions, and when the line of sleighs comes to a standstill, the horses bite with thoroughly Northern gormandism, the block of ice in front of them.

Notwithstanding all this cold, if you are invited to go to the Islands, accept without fear of losing your nose or your ears, — if you are weak enough to care for these pieces of cartilage. Have you not furs, which will preserve you thoroughly?

The troïka, or sleigh with the five seats and three horses, is at the door — go down quickly. Her feet in a bear-skin muff, wrapped up to the chin in a satin pelisse lined with zibeline marten, pressing to her bosom a wadded muff, her veil drawn down, and all covered with innumerable bright spots, she is only waiting for you before starting and fastening down the fur robe to the four studs on the sleigh; you will never feel the cold — those two lovely eyes would warm up the iciest temperature.

In summer the Islands are to St. Petersburg what the Bois de Boulogne, Auteuil, and the Folies-Saint-James are to Paris, but in winter they do not quite merit the name of islands; the frost solidifies the canals, the snow covers them, and the islands are joined to the main land. During the cold weather there is but one element, — ice.

The Neva is crossed, and the last Prospects of the Vassily Ostrov are left behind. The appearance of the buildings changes: the houses, less high, are separated by gardens with wooden fences, the boards placed lengthwise as in Holland; everywhere wood takes the place of stone, or rather of brick; the streets change into roads, and you are driving over a sheet of immacu-

late snow, absolutely level. It is a canal. On the edge of the road small posts, intended to prevent carriages from losing their way in this universal whiteness, look at a distance like kobolds or gnomes wearing tall, white felt caps, and close-fitting brown frocks. A few culverts, the beams of which show faintly under the snow drifted by the wind, alone indicate that one has crossed streams completely frozen and covered over. Soon rises a great fir wood, on the edge of which are built a few *tratkirs* (restaurants) and tea-houses; for people often go on picnics to the Islands at night in a temperature fit to make the mercury curl up within its bulb at the foot of the thermometer.

Lovely indeed, between the black curtains of fir trees, are the long white drives, on which the sleigh-tracks, scarcely perceptible, look like scratches made by a diamond upon ground glass. The wind has shaken from the branches the snow that fell a few days ago. Only here and there are a few spots which shine against the dark verdure like high lights put on by a clever painter. The trunks of the fir trees rise like shafts of pillars, and justify the title "Nature's cathedrals," which the Romanticists have given to forests.

When snow is one or two feet deep, walking becomes impossible, so on that long drive we meet only three or four male or female moujiks, wrapped up in their tulupes, and sinking with their heavy leather or felt boots in the thick white powder. A similar number of dogs, black, or at least nearly so through the contrast of tones, run around in circles like Faust's poodle, or accost each other. I notice the detail, which is no doubt puerile, but which marks that dogs are not numerous in St. Petersburg, since one takes notice of them.

This portion of the Islands is called Krestovsky, and contains a lovely village of chalets or small summer homes, inhabited during the fine season by a colony of families, mostly German. The Russians excel in wooden buildings, and cut out pine at least as skilfully as do the Tyrolese or the Swiss; they make of it embroidery, lace, fleurons, and all sorts of ornaments, worked out with the axe or the saw. These Krestovsky houses, built in the Helvetico-Muscovite style, must make charming summer residences. A great balcony, or rather a lower terrace, which forms a sort of open room, runs along the whole façade on the first floor; it is there that the inhabitants sit in the long

days of June and July, amid flowers and shrubs; pianos, tables, and sofas are brought out, so that the owners may enjoy the delight of living in the open air after being shut up in hothouses for eight months. With the very first fine weather, after the breaking up of the ice on the Neva, a general moving takes place; long caravans of carts, carrying furniture, proceed from St. Petersburg to the villas on the islands. As soon as the days shorten, and the evenings turn cold, every one returns to town, and the cottages are closed until the following year, though they remain just as picturesque under the snow, which transforms their wooden lattice-work into silver filigree.

On continuing one soon reaches a wide clearing, in which rise what are called Russian mountains (switch-backs) in France, and ice hills in Russia. There was a perfect mania for switchbacks in Paris in the early days of the Restoration; they were to be found at Belleville and other public gardens, but the difference in climate necessitated a change in construction. Wheeled chariots ran in grooves, on a sharp slope, and carried along by the force of impulsion ascended to an esplanade lower than the starting-point. Accidents were frequent, for at times the cars ran off the track;

this was why the dangerous amusement was given up. The ice mounds of St. Petersburg are composed of a light lodge with a platform, reached by a wooden stair; the chute, formed of planks, with a balustrade, is supported by posts, and falls in a curve, sharp at first, then gentler, on which is poured repeatedly water that freezes and forms a slide as polished as a mirror. The corresponding lodge has a separate track, which prevents any dangerous collisions. Three or four people go down together on a sleigh, guided by a man who sits behind; or else one goes down alone upon a small sleigh, steered by the hand, the foot, or the end of a stick. Bolder people fly down on their stomachs, or in some other apparently hazardous position, which is not really perilous. The Russians are very skilful in this eminently national sport, which they practise from childhood. It affords them the pleasure of extreme rapidity in great cold, a thoroughly Northern feeling which the foreigner, coming from warmer regions, finds it difficult at first to understand, but which he soon shares.

Very often on leaving a theatre or evening party, when the snow lies like crushed marble, and the moon becomes clear and icy cold, or on moonless nights

when the stars shine with frosty brilliancy, — a party of young people, instead of returning to their well-lighted, comfortable, and warm homes, start, well-wrapped up in their furs, to go and sup at the Islands; they get into a troïka, and the swift equipage, with its three horses spread out like the branches of a fan, goes off with tinkling bells, making the snow fly. The sleeping innkeeper is awakened, the lamps are lighted, the samovar is set boiling, the champagne is iced, dishes of caviare, ham, shreds of herring, chicken-pies, and cakes are placed on the table. They eat, drink of many wines, laugh, talk, smoke, and by way of dessert slide down the ice hills, lighted by moujiks holding torches. They return to town about two or three in the morning, enjoying, as they speed along in the sharp, clean, healthy air of night, the delights of cold; for cold has a delight, a cool intoxication, a dizziness of whiteness, which I, the chilliest of all men, am beginning to appreciate like a Northerner.

If frost-bite has not made this icy description of a Russian winter fall from my reader's hands, and he is bold enough to face again in my company the rigour of the weather, let him come with me, after drinking a glass of good hot tea, to take a turn upon the Neva,

and pay a visit to the camp of the Samoyedes, who have settled down in the very centre of the river, as the only place in St. Petersburg cool enough for them. These polar beings are like white bears; three to four degrees below zero strike them as a springlike temperature, in which they gasp with heat. Their migrations are not regular, and are directed by unknown reasons or caprices. It is years since they had been here, and it is a piece of good luck that they should have arrived during my stay in the City of the Czars.

We will go down to the Neva by Admiralty Square, down the slope, tramped down and slippery, after casting a glance at Falconnet's Peter the Great, which the cold has provided with a white wig, and whose horse must surely be calked to enable it to keep its equilibrium upon the block of Finland granite which serves it as a pedestal. A curious crowd, grouped round the hut of the Samoyedes, forms a black circle on the whiteness of the snow-covered river. We slip in between a moujik in his tulupe, and a soldier in a gray overcoat, and over a woman's shoulder glance into the tent of skins fastened by pegs driven into the ice, and resembling a big paper bag placed point up. A low opening, which can be entered only by crawling on all fours,

enables one to get a glimpse, in the darkness, of bundles of furs, which may possibly be men or women — it is impossible to tell which. Outside, a few skins are hung on cords, snow-shoes are thrown on the ice, and a Samoyede standing by a sleigh, appears to lend himself complacently to the ethnographic investigations of the crowd; he is dressed in a hooded sack, the fur inside; a place for the face is cut out of the hood, and makes it resemble those knitted caps called *passe-montagnes*, or a helmet without a visor; great mittens covering up the sleeves, so as to allow no passage for the air, and thick boots of white felt, fastened by straps, complete this inelegant costume, which, however, is hermetically closed against the cold, and which for the matter of that is rather characteristic. The colour is that of the leather itself, tanned and softened by primitive processes. The face framed in by the hood, sunburned, reddened by the air, shows prominent cheek-bones, a flat nose, a wide mouth, steel-gray eyes, with blond eyelashes, but not ugly, and marked by a sad, intelligent, and sweet expression.

These Samoyedes live here by charging a few kopecks for a drive on the Neva in their sleighs drawn by two reindeer. These sleighs, which are exceedingly light,

have only one small seat, covered with a piece of fur, on which sits the traveller. The Samoyede, standing on one of the wooden runners, drives by means of a long switch with which he touches the reindeer, to increase the pace or to change the direction. Each team is composed of three reindeer, harnessed in a line, or four harnessed four-in-hand. It is curious and strange to see these dainty, frail-looking animals, with their slender legs and stag's-antlers, running so docilely, and drawing burdens. The reindeer go very fast, or rather seem to go very fast, for their movements are extremely lively and rapid; but they are small, and I fancy that a trotter of the Orloff breed would easily distance them, especially if the race was long. These light sleighs describing great curves on the Neva, swinging around, returning to their starting-point after having scarcely marked the surface of the river, — are most graceful indeed. A connoisseur said that the reindeer were not at their best, because it was too warm for them — about forty-five; and in fact one of the poor animals, which had been unharnessed, seemed to be suffocating, and snow was being heaped upon it to revive it.

The sleighs and reindeer filled my imagination with

a fantastic nostalgia of their frozen country. Although I have spent my life in seeking sunshine, I felt myself seized with a curious love of cold: the North was casting its magic spell upon me, and if important work had not kept me in St. Petersburg, I should have gone off with the Samoyedes. What a delight it would be to fly at full speed back towards the Pole, with its corona of aurora borealis, — first through pine forests laden down with snow, then through half buried birch woods, then over an immaculately white wilderness, over the sparkling snow, — a strange land, the silvery aspect of which might easily lead you to believe that you are travelling in the moon, — in the sharp, cutting, icy-cold air, in which corruption is unknown, even in death. I should like to have lived for a few days under the tent, glistening with frost, half buried in the snow, which the reindeer scrape with their feet to uncover the short, scanty moss. Fortunately the Samoyedes went off one fine morning, and on going to the Neva to see them again I found only the gray circle that marked the place of their hut; and with them disappeared my haunting fancy.

Since I am talking of the Neva let me note the singular aspect imparted to it by the blocks of ice cut

from the thick coat that covers it, and which are cast here and there like great pieces of stone, until they are carried away. It makes the river look like crystal or diamond workings; the transparent blocks assume strange, prismatic tints, and all the colours of the solar spectrum, according as the light strikes them. In certain places, where they are heaped up, one might think a fairy palace had fallen in ruins, especially at night when the sun sets in the green, cold sky, traversed on the horizon by bands of carmine. The effects amaze the eye, and yet a painter dare not reproduce them lest he should be accused of improbability or falsehood. Imagine a long snow valley formed by the river bed, with rosy lights and blue shadows, sprinkled with enormous diamonds sparkling like tapers, and ending in a crimson light by way of contrast; in the foreground a boat caught in the ice, a sleigh, or a pedestrian, slowly crossing from one quay to the other.

On turning towards the fortress, when night has fallen, two parallel lines of stars are seen lighting up the quays and river: they are the lights of the lamps planted in the ice on the site of the Troïtsky bridge of boats, which is taken away in winter, for the Neva, as

soon as it freezes, becomes a second Nevsky Prospect and the principal artery of the city. For us inhabitants of temperate regions, where in the most rigorous winters the rivers scarcely carry a few ice-floes, it is difficult not to feel some apprehension when driving across the great stream, the deep waters of which flow silently under the crystal flooring, that might crack open and close over one like a trap; soon, however, the quiet look of the Russians reassures one, and besides, it would take enormous weights to break down a layer of ice two or three feet thick, and the snow which covers it makes it look like a plain. Nothing distinguishes the river from the mainland save here and there, along the quays, which look like walls, a few boats in winter quarters, caught by the cold.

The Neva is a power in St. Petersburg; it is honoured and its waters are blessed with great pomp; this ceremony, which is called the Baptism of the Neva, occurs on the sixth of January (Russian style). I witnessed it from one of the windows of the Winter Palace, to which I had been graciously invited. Although the weather that day was very mild for the season of the year, which is usually that of the severest cold, it would have been difficult for me, as I was not yet quite ac-

climated, to remain for an hour or two bare-headed on that frozen quay, down which a shivering wind is always blowing. The great halls of the palace were filled with an aristocratic crowd: high dignitaries, ministers, the diplomatic body, generals embroidered all over with gold and covered with orders, came and went between lines of soldiers in full uniform, waiting for the ceremony to begin. Divine service was first celebrated in the palace chapel. Concealed within a gallery I followed with respectful interest the ritual of a worship new to me and full of the mysterious majesty of the Orient. From time to time, at prescribed moments, a venerable old man with long beard and hair, wearing a mitre like a mage, and a dalmatic stiff with silver and gold embroidery, supported by two acolytes, issued from the sanctuary, the doors of which opened, and recited the sacred formulæ in a senile but distinct voice. While he chanted his lines I could perceive in the sanctuary, amid the scintillations of the gilding and the tapers, the Emperor and the Imperial family; then the doors closed, and the service continued behind the dazzling veil of the Ikonostas. The singers, the chapel choristers, in great, flame-coloured velvet coats, trimmed with gold, accompanied and supported, with

the marvellous precision of Russian choirs, hymns in which must be contained more than one old theme of the lost music of the Greeks.

After mass the procession filed through the halls of the palace to proceed to the baptism, or rather the blessing, of the Neva. The Emperor, the Grand Dukes in uniform, the clergy in gold and silver copes and beautiful ecclesiastical robes of Byzantine cut, the multitude of generals, the great officers, traversing the compact mass of troops drawn up in the rooms, formed a spectacle as magnificent as it was imposing.

On the Neva itself, opposite the Winter Palace and close to the quay, connected with the palace by a carpeted platform, had been constructed a pavilion, or rather a chapel, with light pillars supporting a cupola of trellis-work, painted green, from which hung a representation of the Holy Ghost surrounded with rays. In the centre of the platform, under a dome, was the mouth of a well, surrounded with a balustrade, and communicating with the waters of the Neva, the icy covering of which had been cut at this spot. A line of soldiers, pretty well apart, kept the ground free on the river for quite a distance around the chapel; they remained bareheaded, their helmets by their sides, their feet in the

snow, so absolutely motionless that they might have been mistaken for guide-posts.

Under the windows of the palace itself, pawed and stamped, held in by their riders, the horses of the Circassians, Lesghins, Tcherkesses, and Cossacks, who formed the Emperor's escort. It gives one a curious sensation to see in a highly civilised place which is not a hippodrome or an opera, warriors resembling those of the Middle Ages, with helmets and coats of mail, armed with bows and arrows, or else dressed in Oriental fashion, having Persian carpets for saddles, for swords curved Damascus blades covered with verses of the Koran, and all of them ready to figure in the cavalcade of an emir or a caliph.

Martial and proud faces, of a wild purity of type, slender, lithe, muscular bodies of elegant port, show under these costumes so characteristic in cut, so happy in colour, and so well fitted to set off human beauty. It is really a curious thing that so-called barbaric people alone know how to dress; civilised races have, I think, lost the feeling for costume.

The procession issued from the palace, and from my window, through the double sashes, I saw the Emperor, the Grand Dukes, and the priests enter the

pavilion, which was soon so full that it was difficult to follow the gestures of the officiating clergy, as they bent over the orifice of the well. The guns on the other side of the river from the Exchange Quay, fired, one after the other, at the supreme moment. A great ball of bluish smoke, lighted by a flash, burst between the snowy carpet of the river and the grayish white sky; then the report made the window-panes tremble. The reports followed each other with perfect regularity. Cannon-firing is at once terribly solemn and joyous, like everything that is strong; its voice, that roars in battle, mingles equally well with feasts; it adds to them an element unknown to the ancients, who had neither bells nor artillery. Noise alone can speak in the midst of great multitudes, and make itself heard in vast spaces.

The ceremony was over, the troops filed past, and the throng of sight-seers withdrew peacefully without disorder, as is the habit of the Russian crowds, which are the most orderly of all.

RACES OF THE NEVA

THERE are to be races on the Neva to-day. Let me not neglect this opportunity of becoming acquainted with a Northern sport which has its own elegance, its own refinement, its own curious side, and which excites as lively passions as other sports do in England or in France.

The Nevsky Prospect and the streets leading to the great square on which rises the Alexander Column, a gigantic monolith of rose granite which surpasses Egyptian enormities, — present a spectacle of extraordinary animation, analogous to that in the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, when a steeple-chase at Marche attracts all the fashionable turn-outs. Troïkas dash by, with tinkling bells, drawn by their three horses, harnessed in fan shape, and each keeping up a different gait. The sleighs slide along on their steel runners, drawn by splendid steppers, held in with difficulty by coachmen wearing square velvet caps, and blue or green kaftans. Other two-horse, four-seated sleighs, berlins, barouches

taken off their wheels and placed on runners turned up at the ends, are driving in the same direction, the whole forming a host of carriages becoming constantly more crowded. An old-fashioned Russian sleigh, with its leather dashboard stretched out like a stunsail, and its little wild-maned horse, galloping by the side of a trotter, slips in and out of the inextricable labyrinth, twisting, speeding, and covering its neighbours with white dust.

Such a concourse of carriages in Paris would produce a great rumour, a prodigious noise, but in St. Petersburg the picture is noisy to the eye alone, if I may so express it: the snow, which interposes its soft carpet between the pavement and the vehicles, destroys sound; on the roads, which have been padded by winter, the steel of the runners makes scarcely as much noise as a diamond cutting a pane of glass. The moujiks' small whips do not crack; the masters, enveloped in their furs, do not speak, for if they did their words would soon be frozen like those which Panurge met near the Pole; and the crowd moves along with wordless activity, in the midst of a silent whirlwind. Although utterly unlike, it is somewhat the same effect as Venice produces.

Pedestrians are rare, for no one walks in Russia, except moujiks, whose felt boots enable them to walk safely on the pavements cleared of snow, but often glazed with ice, especially dangerous when one wears the indispensable galoshes.

Between the Admiralty and the Winter Palace, lies the wooden platform that leads down the quay to the river. At this place the several lines of sleighs and carriages are compelled to slow down, and even to stop altogether until it is their turn to descend.

Let me profit by this stoppage to examine the people with whom chance has placed us in contact. The men wear pelisses, with military caps or beaver caps: hats are infrequent, partly from the fact that it is not a warm covering, and because the brim prevents the collar of the pelisse being turned up, the lower portion of the head being thus left exposed to the icy blast. But the women are dressed less heavily; they do not appear to feel the cold nearly as much as the men. A black satin pelisse lined with zibeline marten or blue Siberian fox, and a muff of the same fur, are all that they add to their street dress, which is in every respect like that of the most elegant women of Paris. Their white necks, which the cold does not succeed in reddening, rise free

and bare out of the fur capes, and their heads are protected only by coquettish French bonnets, the crown of which leaves the hair partly exposed, while the back portion scarcely covers the back of the neck. I think with terror of the colds, the neuralgias, and the rheumatisms which these unprotected beauties run the risk of for the sake of being in the fashion, or exhibiting handsome hair in a country and in a temperature where it is sometimes perilous to return a bow. Animated by the fire of coquetry, they do not appear to feel the cold in the least.

Russia, with its immense extent of territory, comprises many different races, and the types of feminine beauty vary greatly ; yet as characteristic traits may be mentioned a remarkable whiteness of skin, gray-blue eyes, golden or brown hair, and a certain stoutness due to lack of exercise and the seclusion consequent on a winter lasting from seven to eight months. One would take these Russian beauties for odalisques which the Genius of the North keeps shut up in a hothouse. They have a cold-cream and snow complexion, with camellia tints, like the beauties of the seraglio, who constantly keep veiled and whose skin has never been touched by the sun. On the whiteness of their faces

their delicate features show like the features of the face in the moon, and these faint lines form physiognomies of hyperborean sweetness and Arctic grace.

But as if to give the lie to my description, here in a sleigh drawn up near my troïka shines a purely Southern beauty, with eyebrows of velvety black, aquiline nose, long oval face, charming complexion, lips red as pomegranates, a pure Caucasian type, perhaps but yesterday a Mahometan. Here and there eyes somewhat wrinkled and rising towards the temple at the outer angle recall the fact that in one direction Russia borders on China. Dainty Finnish ladies, with white and rosy complexions, present a Northern variety of type that contrasts with beautiful Odessa Greeks, easily known by their straight noses and their great black eyes, like those of Byzantine Madonnas. All this forms a charming *ensemble*, and these pretty heads rise like winter flowers out of a mass of furs, which are themselves covered over with a white or black bear-skin-robe, thrown over the sleighs and barouches.

The Neva is reached by a broad, sloping platform between the bronze lions on the quay, the pedestals of which indicate the extremities of the landing-place when the stream, freed from ice, is traversed by

numerous vessels. The sky was not, that day, of the bright azure noticed when the cold falls below zero: a vast pall of very soft, very delicate, pearly gray cloud, evidently holding snow, hung over the city and seemed to rest on the steeples and spires as upon golden pillars. This neutral white tint brought out the full value of the buildings, painted in light tints, relieved by silver lines. On the other side of the river, which looked like a valley half filled by avalanches, were seen the rostral columns of rose granite, that stand near the classical Exchange; on the point of the island which divides the Neva into two branches, the boldly gilded lines of the Fortress steeple rose in the air, made more brilliant by the gray tone of the sky.

The race course stretched across the river, with its grand-stands of wooden boards, and the track marked out by ropes fastened to posts planted in the ice, and by improvised hedges of pine branches. The number of spectators in carriages was enormous; privileged persons occupied the stands, — if it be a privilege to remain motionless in the cold in an open gallery. Around the race course, sleighs, troïkas, barouches, telegas, and other more or less primitive vehicles were drawn up two and three deep; for there seems to be no

restriction to this popular pleasure, — the river bed is free to everybody. The men and women, in order to see better, climbed to the coachmen's boxes and the back-seats. By the barriers stood the moujiks in sheepskin tulupes and felt boots, soldiers in long overcoats, and such people as had been unable to find better places. This multitude, swarming black upon the ice floor of the Neva, made me feel somewhat uneasy, though no one else seemed to remember that a deep river, about as wide as the Thames at London Bridge, was flowing under an ice crust at least two or three feet thick, while at any one point thousands of spectators and a considerable number of horses, to say nothing of equipages of all kinds, were massed together. But the Russian winter proved true, and did not play the trick of opening trap-doors to swallow up the multitude.

Outside the race course the coachmen were warming up the horses that had not yet competed, or else walked, to cool them down gradually under their Persian blankets, the handsome animals that had already raced.

The course is in the shape of a long ellipse. The sleighs do not start abreast: they are placed at handi-

cap intervals, according to the greater or less speed of the trotters. Two sleighs were placed opposite the grand-stand, two others at the extremities of the ellipse, awaiting the starting signal. Occasionally a man on horseback gallops alongside a trotter to excite it, and induce it to bring out its full speed through rivalry. A sleigh horse must not break its trot, but sometimes the gait is so fast that a galloping horse finds it difficult to keep up, though once well started its companion leaves it to itself. Many coachmen, sure of the staying powers of their animals, disdain to have recourse to this method and drive unaccompanied. Any trotter which breaks and goes more than six strides at a gallop, is disqualified.

It is a splendid sight to see these superb animals which have often cost incredible sums flying over the smooth ice, that, cleared of snow, shows like a strip of dark glass. Their breath issues in long jets of vapour from their red nostrils ; their flanks are bathed in mist, and their tails seem to be powdered with diamond-dust : the calks of their shoes bite into the smooth, slippery surface, and they devour space with the same proud security as if they were trotting over the best-beaten drive in the park. The drivers, throwing them-

selves well back, hold the reins one in each hand, for horses as powerful as these, drawing an insignificant weight, and having to be kept from galloping, need to be held in rather than urged on. The animals also find in the tension a support which allows them to bring out their best speed. Prodigious indeed are the strides of these steppers, which seem to be biting their own knees.

As far as I could see there was no particular condition of age or weight imposed upon the competitors; all that is asked is a certain speed within a given time, measured by a chronometer; at least, this is what seemed to me to be the case. Often troïkas compete with sleighs, drawn by one or two horses; every one selects the vehicle or equipage which he considers most suitable; sometimes even a spectator who has come up in his sleigh takes a fancy to try his luck and enters the competition.

At the races which I am describing, a rather picturesque incident occurred: a moujik who had come from Vladimir, it was said, bringing to the city a load of wood or frozen meat, was watching the races on his rustic troïka, in the midst of the crowd. He wore a tulupe shining with grease, an old, worn fur cap, and limp, white felt boots; a discoloured, unkempt, curly

beard covered his chin. His team was composed of three horses, wild-maned, furry as bears, disgustingly dirty, icicles hanging under their bellies, carrying their heads low and chewing the snow heaped up on the river. A douga as high as an ogee, painted with stripes and zigzags of startling colours, was the most stylish part of the equipage, and no doubt had been cut out with an axe by the moujik himself. This wild and primitive turn-out formed the strangest contrast with the richly appointed sleighs, the splendid troïkas, and the elegant equipages, the horses of which stamped and pawed around the race course. More than one ironical glance was cast upon the humble vehicle. The truth is that amid all that wealth it produced the effect of a stain of cart-grease upon an ermine cloak.

The little horses, however, with their hair sticking with frozen sweat, cast through the stiff hair of their manes side glances at the thorough-breds which seem to move away from them disdainfully, for even animals despise poverty. There was a flash of fire in their eyes, and they stamped on the ice with their dainty hoofs that ended their slender, muscular legs, with fetlocks like eagles' feathers. The moujik standing on his seat was watching the races without appearing surprised at the

performances of the trotters; sometimes indeed a smile flitted under the bristles of his mustache, his gray eye sparkled with slyness and he seemed to say to himself, "We could do just as well." Then suddenly making up his mind he entered the course and tried his luck. The three little cub-like horses proudly shook their heads as if they understood that they had to maintain the reputation of the poor horses of the steppes, and without being urged started at such a pace that the other competitors began to be alarmed. Their little slender legs went like the wind, and they won over all the thorough-breds, whether English, Barb, or Orloff, by one minute and a few seconds. The moujik had not rated his horses too high. The prize was awarded him; it was a magnificent piece of silver plate, made by Vaillant, the fashionable silversmith of St. Petersburg. The victory excited the highest enthusiasm among the usually silent and calm people, and as the winner left the race course amateurs crowded round him and tried to buy his horses; he was offered as much as three thousand roubles apiece, an enormous price both for the animals and the man. I am bound to say, to the moujik's honour, that he absolutely refused to part with them. Wrapping up his piece of plate in some old

stuff, he climbed back on his troïka and returned to Vladimir the same way he had come, refusing at any price to part with the dear animals which had made of him for a moment the lion of St. Petersburg.

The races were finished and the carriages left the river bed for the various quarters of the city. The ascent of the wooden platforms that connect the Neva and the quays would furnish a painter of equine scenes, Svertzkov, for instance, with a characteristic and interesting picture. As they ascended the steep slope, the noble animals arched their necks, clutched at the slippery boards with their hoofs, and pressed hard on their muscular legs ; it was a confusion full of picturesque effects, and that might have been dangerous but for the skill of the Russian coachmen. The sleighs ascended four or five abreast, in regular lines, and more than once I felt at the back of my neck the warm breath of an impatient trotter that would willingly have passed over my head had he not been held in by main force. More than once a flake of foam from a silver bit fell upon the bonnet of some frightened woman, and made her cry out. The carriages looked like an army of cars storming the granite quays of the Neva, which were not unlike the parapets of a fortress ; but in spite of the tumult there was

no accident, — the absence of wheels makes it more difficult for the carriages to interlock, — and the equipages scattered in every direction at a speed that would alarm Parisian prudence.

It is a great pleasure, when one has remained two or three hours in the open air, exposed to a wind that has passed over the Polar snows, to return home, throw off one's pelisse and galoshes, wipe from one's mustache the melting icicles, and light a cigar — for smoking is forbidden in the streets of St. Petersburg; the warm atmosphere of the stove caresses the benumbed body, and restores suppleness to the limbs. A glass of very hot tea (in Russia tea is not drunk in cups) makes one quite comfortable, as the English say; the circulation suspended by the cold is re-established, and one enjoys that peculiar house-charm, which Southerners, living altogether in the open air, are unacquainted with.

But the day is already drawing to a close, for night comes on quickly in St. Petersburg, and by three o'clock lamps have to be lighted; the chimneys smoke on the roofs of the houses, emitting culinary vapours; everywhere the ranges are blazing, for dinner is earlier in the City of the Czars than in Paris: six o'clock is the latest hour, and that only for people who have trav-

elled and acquired French or English habits. It so happens that I am invited to dinner, — I must dress; over my evening clothes I put on my pelisse, and again plunge my feet into the heavy fur galoshes.

Night has fallen; the temperature also; a genuine Arctic wind drifts the snow over the pavements like smoke. The snow skreaks under the runners; in the misty sky shine the great pale stars, and through the darkness glitters on the gilded dome of St. Isaac's a luminous spangle like a sanctuary lamp that never goes out.

I pull the collar of my pelisse up to my eyes; I draw over my knees the bear-skin robe in the sleigh, and without feeling the difference of thirty degrees between the temperature of my home and that of the street, I am soon brought, thanks to the regulation *na prava*, *na leva* (right, left,) to the house where I am expected. Even at the foot of the stairs the hothouse atmosphere seizes upon me, and liquefies the icicles on my beard. In the antechamber a servant, an old soldier on half-pay, who still wears a military overcoat, strips off my furs, which he hooks up among those of the other guests, every one of whom has already arrived, for punctuality is a Russian quality: it is not in Russia that Louis XIV could have said, "I almost had to wait."

RUSSIAN INTERIORS

RUSSIAN antechambers have an aspect of their own. The pelisses suspended on the racks, with their flabby sleeves and straight folds, faintly suggest human bodies hung up; the galoshes placed below simulate the feet, and the effect of the furs in the doubtful light of the little lamp hanging from the ceiling is quite fantastic. Hoffman would lodge queer phantoms of archivists or Aulic counsellors in their mysterious folds; we Frenchmen who are reduced to Perrault's "Tales," see in them Blue Beard's seven wives in the black room. Suspended thus near the stove, the furs imbibe heat, which they preserve outside for an hour or two. Servants are marvellously clever at knowing the different coats; even with a number of guests, when the antechamber resembles a fur store, they never make a mistake, and hand to each person his own garment.

A comfortable Russian home combines all the refinements of French and English civilisation. At the

first glance one might fancy one's self in the West End or the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, but soon innumerable curious details mark the local characteristics. First, the Byzantine Madonna with the Child — the brown faces and hands showing through the spaces cut out in the silver or silver-gilt plate, which represents the draperies — glimmers by the light of a lamp kept constantly burning, and gives you to understand you are neither in Paris nor in London, but in orthodox Russia, in holy Russia. Occasionally a picture of the Saviour takes the place of that of the Virgin. Saints, usually the namesakes of the master or mistress of the house, are also to be seen, encrusted with goldsmith work, and wearing golden halos.

Then the climate compels certain precautions. Everywhere there are double windows, and the space left free between the two sashes is covered with a layer of fine sand intended to absorb the moisture, thus preventing the frost from obscuring the panes with its silvery bloom. Little bags of salt are stuck in it, and at times the sand is concealed under a layer of moss. The double sashes are the cause that in Russia windows have neither shutters, outer blinds, nor jalousies; they can neither be opened nor closed, for the outer

sashes are put on for the winter, and carefully caulked. A single sliding pane serves to renew the air, — an unpleasant and even dangerous operation on account of the great difference between the temperature outside and inside of the house. Thick curtains of rich stuffs further check the effect which the cold might have on the glass, which is much more permeable than is believed.

The rooms are larger and higher ceiled than in Paris. Our architects ,who are so ingenious in designing hives for human bees, would put a whole apartment and even two stories in a single St. Petersburg drawing room. As all the doors are hermetically closed, and the entrance door opens into a heated hall, the temperature is always kept up to sixty at least, which enables ladies to wear muslin dresses, and to go about in gowns with low necks and short sleeves. The brass registers send out uninterruptedly, by night as well as by day, their burning breath; and great stoves of monumental proportions, in handsome white or painted china, rising up to the ceiling spread a steady warmth where registers cannot be installed. Open hearths are not frequent: they are used, where they do exist, in spring and autumn only; in winter they

would carry off the warmth and cool the room, so they are closed and the hearth is filled with flowers. Flowers are a genuine Russian luxury: the houses are full of them, — you find them at the door and all the way up the stairs; ivies climb upon the balustrade; on the landing-places jardinieres are placed opposite seats; in the window recesses great banana-trees, with broad, silky leaves, Taliput palms, magnolias, and tree camellias mingle their bloom with the gilded volutes of the cornices. Orchids flutter in the air around dishes of crystal, porcelain, or curiously wrought terra cotta. From jasper or Bohemian glass vases placed in the centre of the tables or on the corners of sideboards spring sheaves of exotic flowers; they live there as in a hothouse, and indeed every Russian house is a hothouse. Without, you are at the pole; within, you could fancy yourself in the tropics.

It seems to me that this profusion of verdure is due to the need of resting the eye from the implacable whiteness of winter; the desire to see something which is not white must be a sort of nostalgia in a country where snow covers the earth for more than six months of the year. One has not even the satisfaction of looking at the roofs painted green, for they

change their white covering only when spring comes. If the houses were not transformed into gardens it might be thought that green had forever disappeared from nature.

As for the furniture, it is like our own, but larger and ampler, to accord with the greater size of the rooms. But what is thoroughly Russian is this frail nook of costly wood, cut out like the blades of a fan, — a sort of confessional for intimate talks — managed in one corner of the drawing-room, festooned with the rarest climbing-plants, and provided within with divans on which the mistress of the house, avoiding the crowd of guests while still with them, can receive three or four distinguished guests. Sometimes the nook is made of coloured glass with figures drawn with hydrofluoric acid, and set in panels of gilt copper. One occasionally sees also among the stools, arm-chairs, easy-chairs, lounges, *tête-à-tête*, a huge white bear stuffed and upholstered in the shape of a sofa, offering to visitors a truly Arctic seat; sometimes little black bear cubs serve as footstools. These things recall, amid the elegance of modern life, the ice floes of the Polar Sea, the vast snow-covered steppes, and the deep forests of fir trees, — the true Russia, which one is apt to forget in St. Petersburg.

On the other hand the bedrooms are not generally as luxurious and richly furnished as in France. Behind a screen or one of those traceried partitions of which I was speaking just now, is placed a little bedstead like a camp bed or a divan. The Russians are of Eastern origin and even the upper classes do not care for comfortable beds; they sleep where they happen to be, almost anywhere, like the Turks; often in their pelisses, on the broad green leather sofas which are to be met with everywhere. The thought of making the bed-chamber a sort of sanctuary does not occur to them; the old habits of tent life seem to have followed them even in civilised life, with all the refinements and all the corruption of which they are quite familiar.

Rich hangings cover the walls, and if the master of the house prides himself on being an amateur you may be sure that against the red Indian damask and brocatelle with dark gold designs, will stand out, lighted by strong reflectors and framed in the richest frames, paintings by Horace Vernet, Gudin, Calame, Koekkoek, sometimes by Leys, Madou, or Tenkate, or, if he desires to show his patriotism, by Brulov and Aïvasovsky, these being the most fashionable

painters. Our own modern school has not yet reached St. Petersburg; though I have come across two or three Meissoniers and about as many Troyons. The Russians think that our painters do not finish their pictures sufficiently.

The house I have just described is not a palace, but the home of well-to-do people. St. Petersburg is full of mansions and vast palaces, into some of which I shall introduce my reader.

Now that I have sketched the setting, it is time to go to dinner. Before sitting down to table the guests draw near a table on which are placed caviare, pickled fillets of herring, anchovies, cheese, olives, slices of sausage and of Hamburg smoked beef, and other hors-d'œuvre, which are eaten with rolls to create an appetite; this luncheon is taken standing, and is washed down with vermouth, Madeira, Dantzig brandy, cognac, and cummin, a sort of anisette which recalls the raki of Constantinople and the Archipelago. Imprudent or shy travellers who do not know how to resist when they are politely pressed, taste everything, forgetting that this is but the prologue of the play, and they sit down satisfied to the real dinner.

In the houses of all well-bred people dinner is served in the French fashion, yet the national taste betrays itself in a few characteristic details. So along with white bread is served a slice of very dark rye bread, which the Russian guests eat with evident pleasure. They also appear to prize greatly a sort of cucumber pickled in salt called *ogourtzis*, which at first did not strike me as particularly pleasant. When about half-way through the dinner, after the best wines of Bordeaux and champagne have been served, — and these are to be found in Russia only, — porter and ale are drunk, and especially *kwass*, a sort of local beer made of fermented crusts of black bread; one has to get accustomed to the taste of this drink, which does not strike strangers as worthy of the splendid elegance of Bohemian glass or chased silver in which this brown, foaming liquor is served. Nevertheless, after a stay of a few months, one acquires a taste for ogourtzis, kwass, and *chtchi*, the national Russian soup.

Chtchi is a sort of hodge-podge made of lamb's breast, fennel, onions, carrots, cabbage, barley, and prunes. This heterogeneous combination of ingredients has a peculiar savour which one quickly learns

to like, especially when much travelling has made a man a cosmopolite in matters culinary and has prepared his digestion for every kind of shock. Another soup widely used is a soup with balls, a consommé in which is thrown, when it is boiling, a paste mixed with eggs and spices; the heat shapes it into small round or oval balls, something like poached eggs in Parisian consommé. Little pastry balls are served with chtchi.

Every one who has read "Monte Cristo," remembers the meal in which the former prisoner of the Château d'If, realising the marvels of fairy-land with his golden wand, has a Volga sturgeon served up,—the sterlet, or sturgeon, being a gastronomical phenomenon unknown on the most refined tables outside of Russia. The sterlet deserves its reputation: it is an exquisite fish, with delicate white meat, somewhat rich perhaps, with a flavour something between that of a lamprey and a smelt. It grows to a very large size, but the medium-sized fish are best. Though I do not disdain good eating, I am neither Grimod de la Reynière, nor Cussy, nor Brillat-Savarin; so I regret that I cannot speak of the sterlet enthusiastically enough, for it is a dish worthy of the most consummate

gourmets. To one who prizes good eating, the Volga sterlet is worth a trip to Russia.

Grouse are frequently served at Russian tables; their flesh perfumed by the juniper berries on which they feed, gives out an odour of turpentine which startles one at first. The great woodcock is also served, while fabulous bear's-hams occasionally take the place of the classical York hams; and elk is substituted for ordinary roast beef. These are dishes not to be met with on any Occidental menu. Every nation, even when invaded by the uniformity of civilisation, preserves its peculiar tastes, and certain native dishes, the savour of which strangers appreciate but rarely. So the cold soup in which pieces of ice float amid pieces of fish in a broth at once perfumed, vinegary and sweet, startles exotic palates like an Andalusian *gaspacho*; this soup, however, is served in summer only; it is said to be very refreshing, and Russians are passionately fond of it.

Vegetables are mostly grown in hothouses, so their maturity is not marked by seasons, and early vegetables cease to be early or are always so. New green peas are eaten at St. Petersburg every month of the year. Asparagus does not know what winter is: it is large,

tender, watery, and pure white; it is never seen with that green tip which it has with us, and may be eaten indifferently from either end.

In England salmon cutlets are served; in Russia chicken cutlets. They came into fashion when Emperor Nicholas tasted them at a little inn near Torjek, and thought them good; the recipe had been given to the hostess by an unfortunate Frenchman who had no other means of paying his bill, and who thus made the woman's fortune. I approve the Emperor's taste; stuffed cutlets are indeed a dainty dish. I must also mention cutlets *à la Preobrajenski*, which ought to figure on the menus of the best restaurants.

I have noticed only the peculiarities and differences, for in great establishments the cookery is entirely French and done by French people: France furnishes the world with cooks.

Fresh oysters are considered a great delicacy in St. Petersburg, as they are brought from a very great distance; the heat of summer spoils them, the cold of winter freezes them. They cost sometimes as much as a rouble apiece, yet these costly bivalves are seldom good. There is a story told of a moujik who had become very rich, who received his liberty, — for

which he had in vain offered fifty or a hundred thousand roubles, — in exchange for a barrel of fresh oysters given to his master at a time when they were not to be had. I do not guarantee the truth of the story, but even if it is made up it proves at least how rare oysters are in St. Petersburg at certain seasons.

For precisely the same reason there is always a dish of fruit at dessert, — oranges, pineapples, grapes, pears, apples, grouped in elegant pyramids. The grapes are usually brought from Portugal, but sometimes their pale amber grains have ripened in the hothouses of the dwelling half buried under the snow. In January, I ate in St. Petersburg strawberries that were trying to look red on a green leaf in a miniature pot. Fruit is one of the great manias of Northern peoples: they import it at great cost, or force the rebellious nature of their climate to produce at least an outward seeming of fruits, but these lack taste and perfume; a stove, however well heated, never quite makes up for the sunshine.

I hope I may be pardoned these gastronomical details, for there is a certain interest in knowing the way in which a nation feeds: the proverb, modified to read; "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you

who you are," is just as true as in its original form. Though the Russians imitate French cookery they have kept their taste for certain national dishes, and after all, these are their favourites. It is the same with their character: although they conform to the most recent refinements of western civilisation, they still preserve certain primitive instincts, and even the most highbred among them would not find it very difficult to go and live on the steppes.

At table, a servant dressed in black, with white cravat and white gloves, as correct in his dress as an English diplomat, stands behind you, imperturbably serious, ready to satisfy your slightest wishes. You could easily believe yourself in Paris, but if you happen to look attentively at the man you will notice he has a golden yellow complexion, little black, wrinkled eyes turned up towards the temples, prominent cheek bones, a flat nose, and thick lips. The master of the house, who has caught your glance, says quietly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, "He is a Mongolian, a Tartar from the confines of China."

The Tartar, who is a Mahometan and perhaps an idolater, does his work with cheerful regularity, and the most scrupulous butler could find no fault with

him. He looks like a real servant, but I should like him better if he wore the costume of his tribe, — a tunic fastened around his waist by a metal belt, and a lambskin cap. It would be more picturesque but less European, and Russians do not wish to look Asiatic.

The whole table service —porcelains, crystals, silverware, centre-pieces — leaves nothing to be desired; but there is nothing characteristic about it, save occasionally pretty little spoons of platinum, inlaid with gold, used at dessert and with coffee and tea. Dishes of fruit and confections alternate with dishes of flowers; sweets and pastry are often surrounded by violets — the hostess graciously distributes these bouquets to the guests.

The conversation is always in French, especially if the guest is a stranger; every well-bred Russian speaks our language very easily, with fashionable expressions and current slang just as if he had learned it on the Boulevard des Italiens. They have no accent, but they can be known by a slight sing-song, which is not ungraceful and which you get to imitate. Their manners are polished, caressing, and thoroughly urbane. It is surprising how well up they are in the least details

of our literature ; they read a great deal, and more than one author little known in France is well known in St. Petersburg. The gossip of the stage and the demi-monde travels to the banks of the Neva, and I learned a great many piquant Parisian matters which I was ignorant of.

The women are also very well educated, thanks to the characteristic facility of Slavonic races : they read and speak several languages ; many of them have read Byron, Goethe, and Heinrich Heine in the original ; and if a writer is presented to them they manage to show him, by an apt quotation from his works, that they have read his books and know them. As for their dress, it is exceedingly elegant and fashionable. Crinolines are as widespread in St. Petersburg as in Paris, and allow of a display of superb stuffs. Quantities of diamonds sparkle upon very handsome shoulders, very much exposed ; and it is only a few gold bracelets, from Circassia or the Caucasus, that show by their Oriental work that one is in Russia.

After dinner the guests wander through the rooms. On the tables are albums, books of Beauty, keepsakes, landscapes, — which afford opportunities for conversation to shy and timid people. Graphoscopes amuse

with their pictures. Sometimes a lady rises, yielding to requests, sits down at the piano, and accompanies herself, as she sings, in a strange accent resembling a cachucha danced by moonlight on the snow, some national Russian air or gypsy song, in which the melancholy of the North is mingled with the passion of the South.

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

A BALL AT THE WINTER PALACE

I AM going to tell you of an entertainment at which I was present without being there: my body was absent though my eyes were invited, — a Court ball. I saw everything, being myself invisible, and yet I did not wear the ring of Gyges, nor a green felt kobold hat, nor any other talisman.

On the Dvortsovaïa Square, or Palace Square, carpeted with snow, stood numerous carriages in a temperature that would have frozen Parisian coachmen and horses, but which did not appear to the Russians severe enough to make it worth while to light the stoves placed under the kiosks, with tin Chinese roofs, near the Winter Palace. The trees of the Admiralty sparkling with frost, looked like great white plumes planted in the ground, and the rose granite of the column was glazed with a coat of ice like sugar frosting. The moon, rising pure and bright, poured its

dead light upon this nocturnal whiteness, casting blue shadows, and imparting a fantastic appearance to the motionless silhouettes of the equipages, the frost-covered lamps of which, like Arctic fire-flies, studded the vast extent with yellow dots. Every window of the gigantic Winter Palace was ablaze, making it look like a mountain pierced with holes, and lighted up by an internal conflagration.

Deepest silence reigned over the Square. The severity of the weather prevented sight-seers, such as the spectacle of a similar entertainment, even seen from afar and from the outside, would certainly attract with us; but even if there had been a crowd, the approaches to the palace are so vast that it would have been scattered and lost in the enormous space which an army alone could fill.

A sleigh traversed diagonally the great sheet of snow, on which fell the shadow of the Alexander Monument, and vanished down the dark street that separates the Winter Palace from the Hermitage,—a street which, thanks to its aerial bridge, somewhat resembles the Canal della Paglia in Venice.

A few moments later an eye, which it is unnecessary to suppose joined to a body, was flying along the cornices

of the portico of one of the galleries of the palace. The gallery seen from this point extended to a great length; on its polished pillars and floor gleamed the reflections of the gildings and the tapers; paintings hung between the pillars, but the fore-shortening prevented the subjects being made out. Men in brilliant uniforms and ladies in rich court dress were all moving about in it. Little by little the numbers increased, and the company, like a multi-coloured, glittering pomp, filled the gallery, which had become too narrow in spite of its large dimensions.

Every glance was turned towards the door by which the Emperor was to enter. The door opened; the Emperor, the Empress, and the Grand Dukes walked down the gallery between the two rows of guests, addressing, with gracious and noble familiarity, a few words to the notabilities whom they met. Then the whole imperial group disappeared through a door opposite the one by which they had entered, followed at respectful distance by the great officers of state, the members of the diplomatic body, military officers, and courtiers.

The ball-room was like a furnace of heat and light, so blazingly brilliant that one might have thought it on fire. Lines of light ran along the cornices; in

the bays between the windows, chandeliers laden with tapers burned like burning bushes; hundreds of lustres hung from the ceiling, forming flaming constellations in a phosphorescent vapour. All these lights, the beams of which crossed and re-crossed, formed the most dazzling *al giorno* illumination which ever blazed sunlight upon an entertainment.

Looking down upon this sight, the first impression, as one bent over the abyss of light, was vertiginous; at first it was impossible to make out anything through the vapour, the effulgence, the coruscation, the irradiation, the flame of the tapers, the sheen of the mirrors, the gleam of the gilding, the sparkling of diamonds and precious stones, the shimmering of stuffs. The ever-changing scintillations prevented any shape being distinctly noted. Then little by little the eye became used to the glare, embraced the whole extent of the hall, which is of gigantic dimensions, built of marble and white stucco, and the polished walls of which shone like jasper and porphyry in Martin's engravings of Babylonian buildings, which faintly reflect luminosity and objects.

A kaleidoscope in which coloured bits of glass constantly fall away and get together again, forming

new designs; a chromatrope, with its dilatations and contractions, in which a web becomes a flower, that turns its petals into the point of a diadem, and finally whirls around like the sun, changing from ruby to emerald, from topaz to amethyst, around a diamond centre, can alone, multiplied millions of times, give an idea of that moving maze of gold, gems, and flowers, the brilliant arabesques of which are constantly changing with the incessant motion of the people. When the imperial family entered, this mobile brilliancy quieted down, and it was then possible to make out faces and figures, amid the stilled scintillation.

In Russia Court balls are opened by what is called a *polonaise*. It is not a dance, but a sort of filing-past, of procession, of torchlight march, which is very striking. The company divides so as to leave a sort of lane in the centre of the ball-room. When everybody is placed the band plays an air of a slow, majestic rhythm, and the promenade begins. It is led by the Emperor with a princess or other lady whom he desires to honour.

That evening Emperor Alexander II. wore a handsome military uniform, which set off his tall, well-

made, handsome figure. It consisted of a sort of white tunic coming half-way down the thigh, with gold frogs, and with blue Siberian fox trimming. He wore the stars of the great orders of knighthood; his legs were set off by close-fitting breeches and light boots. The Emperor wears his hair cut close, so that his smooth, full, well-shaped brow was completely seen. His absolutely regular features seem intended to be reproduced on a gold or bronze medal. His blue eyes acquire a peculiar beauty from the brown tints of his face, which is less fair than his brow, on account of his many trips and his taking much exercise in the open air. The outline of his mouth has a clearness and sharpness of line which is quite Greek and sculptural. The expression of his face is majestic and sweet, lighted up at times by a very gracious smile.

Next to the imperial family came the great officers of the army and of the household, each great dignitary accompanying a lady. They wore uniforms covered with gold, epaulets studded with diamonds, endless stars of orders, and gems, which formed a blaze of light on their breasts. Some of them, more highly favoured and of higher rank, wore round the neck an order which is a mark of friendship even more than of

honour, if that be possible, — the Emperor's picture set with brilliants; but these were few in number.

The procession keeps on walking and grows as it goes. A nobleman leaves the line, holds out his hand to the lady opposite him, forming a new couple that takes its place in the procession, regulating its steps and going more quickly or more slowly according to the pace set by the leader. It cannot be very easy for two people to walk thus, holding each other by the tips of the fingers, under the glance of many eyes that easily become ironical. The least awkwardness in appearance, the slightest shuffling of the foot, the smallest break in the measure, are noticed. Military habits save many of the men, but how difficult it is for the women! Most of them, however, manage admirably well, and of more than one it could be said, *Et vera incessu patuit dea.* They go along with light step, covered with feathers, flowers, and diamonds, modestly casting their eyes down or letting their glances wander with an air of perfect innocence, manœuvring their train of silk and lace with the least turn of the body or a touch of the heel, and cooling themselves with a slight flutter of the fan, as much at their ease as if walking in a solitary avenue of

the park. To walk in a noble, graceful, and simple manner while being looked at is an accomplishment which many a great actress has never attained.

A characteristic of this Russian Court festival was that occasionally a princess was joined by some young, wasp-waisted, broad-chested Circassian prince in elegant and splendid Oriental costume, — by a chief of the Lesghians of the guard or a Mongolian officer whose soldiers are still armed with bows, quivers, and bucklers. Under the white glove of civilisation was concealed, as it held the hand of a princess or countess, a little Asiatic hand accustomed to handle the short *kindjal* with its brown muscular fingers. No one seemed to be surprised at this, for it is quite natural — is it not? — that a Mahometan or Mongolian prince should march with a great lady of St. Petersburg, herself of the Orthodox-Greek church, for they are both of them subjects of the Emperor, the Czar of all the Russias.

The uniforms and Court dresses of the men are so brilliant, so rich, so varied, so heavily covered with gold embroidery and orders, that the ladies, in spite of modern elegance and the graceful lightness of the present fashions, find it difficult to rival this massive

brilliancy. As they cannot be more splendid, they are more beautiful; their bare shoulders and bosoms are better than all the gold embroideries in the world. To rival such splendour they would need to wear, like the Byzantine Madonnas, gowns of stamped gold and silver, pectorals, gems, and halos studded with diamonds; but how could one dance with such a weight of gold-work on one's body?

Yet it must not be supposed that the ladies carry simplicity to extremes; their plain dresses are of English point-lace, and the two or three skirts they wear are more costly than a dalmatic of gold or silver brocade. The sprigs of flowers upon the tarlatan or gauze skirt are festooned with diamond clasps; the velvet ribbon is clasped by a gem that might have come from the Czar's crown. Certainly a white gown of taffeta, tulle, or watered silk, with a few rows of pearls and a head-dress to match, a knot of two or three pearls twisted in the hair, is utmost simplicity; but the pearls are worth a hundred thousand roubles, and never will a diver bring up from the depths of ocean rounder or purer gems. Besides, simplicity of dress is a way of paying one's court to the Empress, who prefers elegance to splendour. It is quite certain

that Mammon does not lose by it; only at the first glance, and when passing by quickly it might be supposed that Russian women are less luxurious than the men, which is a mistake: like all women, they have an art of making gauze more expensive than gold.

When the polonaise has traversed the gallery and the ball-room, the ball begins. There is nothing characteristic about the dances; there are quadrilles, waltzes, redowas, as in London, Madrid, Vienna, in fact, anywhere in society. I must, however, except the mazurka, which is danced in St. Petersburg with a degree of perfection and elegance unknown elsewhere. Local peculiarities tend to disappear everywhere, and they are first excluded by the upper classes; to find them one has to remove from the centre of civilisation and to go among the people.

The prospect was enchanting; the figures of the dance showed symmetrically in the midst of the splendid multitude, which drew aside to give room. In the whirl of the waltz the dresses ballooned like the skirts of Whirling Dervishes, and as the dancers spun around the diamond clasps, the gold and silver ornaments seemed to lengthen out in zigzag gleams like lightning. The little white-gloved hands placed upon the waltzers'

epaulets looked like white camellias in massive gold vases.

Among the most noticeable of the guests was the First Secretary of the Austrian embassy, in his superb costume of a Hungarian magnate, and the Greek ambassador wearing a Palikar cap, braided vest, fustanella, and gaiters.

After watching this for an hour or two, the eye transported itself into another hall by mysterious labyrinthine passages, in which the distant strains of the band and of the dance died in faint murmurs. This immense hall was comparatively dark; it was the supper room; many a cathedral is less vast. At the back, through the shadows, showed the white lines of tables; at the corners faintly gleamed great masses of plate, from which flashed sudden reflections, the source of which was untraceable; these were the sideboards. A velvet-covered dais was next a horseshoe table. Footmen in full livery, stewards, officers of the household, were giving the final touches, going and coming with silent activity. A few lights glittered against the dark background like sparks on burnt paper. Innumerable tapers were placed in candelabra, ran along the friezes, and round the arches; they rose white from their

rich holders like pistils rising from the calyxes of flowers, but not the least luminous star quivered upon them; they looked like frozen stalactites; and one could even hear a sound as of overflowing waters — the low murmur of the approaching multitude. The Emperor appeared on the threshold, and the light suddenly was! Swift as lightning, a subtle flame ran from taper to taper; everything blazed at once and torrents of light abruptly filled the vast hall, illumined as if by magic. This sudden change from semi-darkness to the most dazzling brilliancy was absolutely fairylike. In our prosaic age every prodigy has to be explained; threads of fulminated cotton connected all the wicks of the tapers, which were themselves steeped in an inflammable essence; fire being applied in seven or eight places, it instantly ran along the whole line. The same method is employed to light up the great chandeliers of St. Isaac's. A similar effect would be produced by using gas, turning it down and suddenly turning it on full; but I am not aware that gas has been introduced into the Winter Palace, — pure wax tapers only are used there. It is in Russia only that bees still furnish illumination.

The Empress took her place, with some very dis-

tinguished personages, on the dais where was set the horseshoe table; behind her gilded arm-chair bloomed like gigantic fireworks a huge sheaf of white and rose camellias trained against the marble wall. Twelve tall negroes, selected from among the finest specimens of the African race, dressed in Mameluke costumes, with white twisted turbans, green jackets braided with gold, full red trousers, with cashmere sashes, the whole braided and embroidered down every seam, went up and down the steps of the dais, handing the dishes to the footmen or taking them from them, with the grace and dignity peculiar to the people of the East, even when discharging some servile duty. These Orientals, having forgiven Desdemona, were majestically fulfilling their part, and gave to the purely European entertainment an Asiatic touch in the best of taste.

No seats being assigned, the guests seated themselves where they chose, at the tables prepared for them. Rich centre-pieces of silver and gold, representing groups of figures, flowers, mythological subjects, or fanciful decorations, adorned the centre of each; candelabra alternated with pyramids of fruits and confections. Seen from above, the dazzling symmetry of the crystals, the porcelains, the silverware, and the bouquets,

was better grasped than from below. A double row of women's bosoms, edged with lace and sparkling with diamonds, ran along the tables.

The Emperor walked around, speaking to those whom he desired to honour, sitting down occasionally and putting a glass of champagne to his lips, then going to repeat the same politeness farther on. These stops of a few minutes are considered a very great favour.

After supper dancing was resumed, but the night was waning apace; it was time to leave; there could only be a mere repetition of what I had seen before. The sleigh which had traversed the square, to stop at a little door in the street which separates the Winter Palace from the Hermitage, reappeared going towards the church of St. Isaac, carrying off a pelisse and a fur cap under which no face could be seen. As if the heavens sought to rival the splendours of earth, the Aurora Borealis was flashing its silver, gold, purple, and pearl fires, and extinguishing the stars with its phosphorescent beams.

THE THEATRE

THE theatres in St. Petersburg have a monumental and classic look; the style of the architecture generally recalls that of the Odéon at Paris, and the theatre at Bordeaux. Standing alone in the centre of vast squares, ingress and egress are equally easy. For my own part I should prefer a more original style, and it seems to me that it would have been possible to create one out of the forms suited to the country, from which novel effects could have been obtained; but this reproach is not confined to Russia: an unintelligent admiration of antiquity has peopled every capital city with Parthenons and Maisons Carrées, copied more or less exactly, with the assistance of stone, brick, and plaster; but nowhere do these poor Greek orders look more unhappy and more out of place than in St. Petersburg. Accustomed to azure sunshine they shiver under the snow which covers their flat roofs during the long winter. It is true that these roofs are carefully cleared after every

snow-fall, a fact which is the strongest condemnation of the style chosen. Imagine ice stalactites on acanthus leaves, and Corinthian capitals! At the present moment there is a Romanticist reaction in favour of the Russo-Byzantine architecture, and I hope it may succeed. Every country, when it is not forced to err in the name of pretended good taste, produces its own monuments, exactly as it produces its own men, animals, and plants, in accordance with the necessity of the climate, religion, and origin. What Russia needs is the Greek style of Byzantium, and not the Greek style of Athens.

With this reservation I can only praise the theatres. The Grand Theatre or Italian Opera is magnificent, and of colossal size, rivalling la Scala and San Carlo. The carriages, which stand upon a vast square, can approach without confusion or disorder. Two or three vestibules with glass doors prevent the cold outer air from penetrating into the auditorium, and make a transition between a temperature of five to ten above zero outside, to sixty-eight or seventy inside. Old soldiers in veterans' uniforms, take the pelisses, furs, and galoshes of the spectators at the entrance, and return them without ever making a mistake; this

particular memory for furs strikes me as a Russian specialty. Just as at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, men attend the Italian Opera at St. Petersburg only in full dress, unless they wear the uniform of some rank or office, which is more general. The ladies are in evening dress, bare-headed, low-necked, and with short sleeves; this etiquette of dress, which I approve of, contributes greatly to the brilliancy of the spectacle.

The parterre is divided in the centre by a broad passage way, and is surrounded by a semicircular corridor, lined on one side by a row of boxes, so that between the acts one can go and chat with acquaintances who happen to be in the boxes. This commodious arrangement, found in all the principal theatres of capital cities except in Paris, should be imitated there when the Opera is finally rebuilt. It is easy to leave and to regain one's place without disturbing any one.

The first thing that strikes one on entering, is the Imperial box, which is not placed as with us between the proscenium pillars, but in the centre, opposite the actors; it rises to the second row of boxes. Huge gilded staffs, heavily carved, support velvet curtains

drawn back with golden cords and tassels, and upbear a gigantic Russian coat of arms most proudly and fantastically heraldic. The double-headed eagle with its double crown, wings displayed, fan-shaped tail, the feathers of which are somewhat like fleurons, grasping in its talons the orb and sceptre, with the escutcheon of St. George in pretence, and on its escalloped breast the arms of kingdoms, duchies, and provinces, like the collar of an order of knighthood, — forms a very fine motive of ornamentation. No Greco-Pompeian decoration could produce so satisfactory an effect or be so suitable.

The curtain does not represent a velvet curtain with broad folds and deep gold embroidery, but a view of Petershoff, with its arcades, porticoes, statues, and roofs painted green in Russian fashion. The balustrades of the boxes, regularly superimposed in the Italian fashion, are ornamented with white medallions in rich gold frames, containing figures and attributes in a light and tender tone, standing out against the rose-coloured background with a pastel-like effect. There are no balconies or galleries. The proscenium, instead of being flanked with pillars, is isolated by tall, carved and gilded staffs not unlike the poles intended to sup-

port Oriental tents,—a novel and graceful arrangement.

It is not easy to define the style of the architecture of the auditorium unless I borrow from the Spaniards the name *plateresco*, which means the goldsmith style, and indicates a sort of architecture in which ornament displayed itself in numberless exuberant caprices, with an aristocratic richness that knows neither curb nor rule. It is full of rockery-work, nuts, foliage, fleurons, and innumerable gilded points which reflect the brilliancy of the lustres. The general effect is proud, splendid and happy. The luxurious auditorium is a worthy frame for the luxurious display made by the spectators. I prefer this ornamental folly in a theatre to dully correct architecture. In such cases slight extravagance is preferable to pedantry. What more can be desired than velvet, gold, and the like in profusion?

The first row of boxes above the floor is called the swell row, and although there is no formal rule to that effect, the swell row is reserved for the upper aristocracy and the great dignitaries of the Court. No untitled woman, however rich and respectable, would dare to sit there; her presence in that priv-

ileged line would astonish everybody and herself most of all. Here money does not efface every line of demarcation.

The first rows of the orchestra stalls are, by custom, reserved for persons of distinction. The row next to the musicians is occupied by great officers of the crown, ambassadors, first secretaries of embassies, and other important and influential personages; a stranger who is famous for some reason or other may sit there. The next two rows are also exceedingly aristocratic. In the fourth row bankers, strangers, functionaries, and artists begin to show, but a merchant would not dare to venture beyond the fifth or sixth row. It is a sort of tacit convention or agreement, which nobody invokes, but which everybody obeys.

This familiar custom of sitting in the orchestra stalls surprised me at first when I saw it followed by people of such high rank, including the first personages of the Empire. Though the possession of a stall does not preclude one having a box for the family, the stall is the preferred place, and that habit has, no doubt, given rise to the reservation which drives back the ordinary public to the rows farther behind. This distinction shocks no one in Russia, where society is divided into

fourteen very distinct categories, the first of which often contains but two or three persons.

At the Italian Opera in St. Petersburg the opera and the ballet are not given on the same evening; they form perfectly distinct performances, and are given on separate days. The subscription to the ballet is less than that to the opera. As the dance alone forms the spectacle, the ballets are longer than with us. They comprise four and even five acts, with many tableaux and changes of scenery, or else two are given on the same evening.

The stars of song and dance have all appeared at the Grand Theatre. Every one has shone in its turn in this polar sky, without losing any of its brilliancy; by dint of roubles and warmth of welcome, the chimerical fear of loss of voice and rheumatism has been overcome: neither throats nor legs have suffered in that country of snows, where the cold is seen without being felt. Rubini, Tamburini, Lablache, Mario, Grisi, Taglioni, Elssler, and Carlotta have in turn been admired and understood there, — indeed, Rubini was knighted. Imperial approval stimulates the artists and proves to them that they are delicately appreciated, although it is often somewhat late in life that they make up their minds to undertake the trip.

It is not an easy matter for a dancer to win applause in St. Petersburg; the Russians are experts in such matters, and the scrutiny of their opera glasses is dreaded. Any one who has triumphantly passed this test may feel entirely safe. Their Conservatory of dancing turns out remarkable pupils, and a *corps de ballet* unequalled for the *ensemble*, precision, and rapidity of its evolutions. It is delightful to watch those lines so straight, those groups so well formed, that break up only at the exact moment, to immediately re-form under another aspect; all those little feet which strike the ground in time, all those choregraphic battalions which are never disconcerted and never get tangled up in their manœuvres. At St. Petersburg there is no talking, no sneering, no glances cast at the stage-boxes or the orchestra stalls; it is actually a world of pantomime whence speech is absent, and the action does not overflow the frame. The *corps de ballet* is carefully chosen among the pupils trained in the Conservatory. Many are pretty, all are young and shapely, and know their business, or art, if you prefer it, thoroughly.

The scenery, very rich, very varied, very carefully painted, is the work of German painters. The compo-

sition is often ingenious, poetic, and learned, but occasionally overladen with needless details which draw the eye, and spoil the effect. The colouring is usually pale and cold; the Germans, as every one knows, are not colourists, and one feels this lack when coming from Paris, where the magic of scene-painting is carried to such a high point. As for the theatre itself, it is admirably equipped, the flies, the traps, the machinery for transformations, the electric light effects, and all those involved in complicated scene-setting, are carried out with the most accurate promptness.

The aspect of the auditorium, as I have said, is exceeding brilliant. The toilets of the ladies stand out beautifully from the purple-velvet background of the boxes. To the stranger the *entr'actes* are no less interesting than the performance itself; one may without impropriety turn one's back to the stage and for a few moments gaze through one's glasses at the varied and novel feminine types. An obliging neighbour, thoroughly acquainted with the aristocracy, will give the correct titles of Princess, Countess, or Baroness to the fair or dark faces, which unite the reverie of the North with Oriental placidity, just as they mingle flowers with diamonds.

The Théâtre-Français, also called the Michael Theatre, is situated on Michael Square. The interior is conveniently arranged, but rather meanly decorated. As at the Grand Theatre, the first rows of the orchestra stalls are occupied by Russians and foreigners of distinction. It is much frequented, and the make-up of the company leaves nothing to be desired. The actors strive to obtain novelties for their own benefits, which generally take place on Saturday or Sunday, and which settle the programme for the week. Many a play is performed for the first time in St. Petersburg almost simultaneously with its production in Paris.

THE STCHOUKINE DVOR

EVERY city has a mysterious receptacle far from the centre, which one may easily miss seeing, even during a long stay, if one's habit is to wander through the same network of aristocratic streets; it is the city's ossuary, to which drift, filthy, dirty, and unrecognizable, all the débris of luxury, still good enough for purchasers at fifth or sixth hand. Thither find their way the dainty bonnets, delicate masterpieces of fashionable milliners, now deformed, faded, greasy, fit to be worn by learned asses; the fine, black-cloth dress-coats, formerly covered with orders of knighthood, which had the honour of figuring at splendid balls; the evening dresses given away some morning to a maid, the yellowed blondes, damaged laces, worn-out furs, old-fashioned furniture, — the humus and stratum of civilisation. Paris has its Temple, Madrid its Rastro, Constantinople its Lice Bazaar, and St. Petersburg, its Stchoukine Dvor, — a most ragged quarter well worth visiting.

Drive up the Nevsky Prospect in your sleigh, past the Gostiny Dvor, a sort of Palais-Royal, with galleries bordered by elegant shops; having reached this point say, "Na leva" to your izvochtchik, and having traversed three or four streets you will have reached your destination.

Enter, if your olfactory nerves are not too sensitive, by the shoe and leather bazaar; the strong odour of leather, mingling with the smell of sour cabbage, forms a thoroughly local perfume, which strangers notice much more than the Russians, and which it is very difficult to get used to. But if one wishes to see everything one must not be too particular.

The shops in the Stchoukine Dvor are built of boards; they are filthy hovels, the musty tones of which showed dirtier than usual by contrast with the immaculateness of the snow that silvered the roofs. Hanging in the open air, and set off by a few touches of snow, strings of greasy old leather boots, — and such boots! — stiffened skins recalling by their sinister, exaggerated silhouette the form of the animals from which they had been stripped; filthy, ragged tulupes still preserving a faint human shape, formed the composite decoration of the stalls and looked wretch-

edly lugubrious under the lowering, yellowish-gray sky. The dealers themselves were not much cleaner than their goods.

A great number of streets divide the wooden shops of the Stchoukine Dvor; each quarter is devoted to a particular trade. At the corners of the squares stand small chapels, in the interior of which silver and silver-gilt plates of miniature Ikonostases gleam in the light of lamps; anywhere else in the Stchoukine Dvor it is forbidden to have lights, for a single spark would set fire to that medley of old boards and old rags; the danger is risked only for the greater glory of the images. These masses of plate have a luminosity of their own in this dark and wretched quarter. Buyers and sellers as they pass before the chapels make innumerable signs of the cross after the Greek mode; some, either more fervent or less in a hurry, prostrate themselves in the snow to murmur a prayer, and as they rise drop a kopeck in the alms-box placed by the door.

One of the most curious streets of the Stchoukine Dvor is that of the makers of ikons. If we did not know the year it would be easy to fancy one's self in the Middle Ages, so archaic in style are these paintings,

which however are of the most recent production; Russia observes the Byzantine tradition with absolute fidelity in the painting of images. The illuminators seem to have served their apprenticeship on Mount Athos, at the convent of Agia Lavra, and to have studied the precepts of the manual training collected by the monk Pansélenos, the Raphael of that very special art which looks upon the too accurate imitation of nature as a form of idolatry.

The shops are covered with images from top to bottom: there are Madonnas, showing, through stamped out parts of the gold or silver plate, their brown heads, copied from the portrait of the Virgin painted by St. Luke; Christs and saints, appreciated by devotees in proportion as they are more primitively barbaric; paintings of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, with innumerable figures with stiff, symmetrical gestures, purposely dark in colour and covered with yellow varnish like Persian sheaths and mirror frames, in order to imitate the grime of ages; bronze plates hinged like the leaves of a screen or the shutters of a triptych, framing in a series of pious *bassi relievi;* crosses in oxidized silver, in charming Greco-Byzantine patterns, in which a whole world of microscopic figures,

swarming between inscriptions in old Slavic characters, perform the sacred drama of Golgotha; illuminated book-covers, and innumerable other articles of devotion.

Some of these images, finished with greater care, and more richly gilded or plated, fetch pretty high prices. It is useless to look for artistic merit in any of them, though all, even the coarsest, have amazing style. The barbaric forms, the crude colours, the mingling of goldsmith work and painting, give them a hieratic and solemn appearance, better fitted perhaps to stimulate piety than more skilful representations. These images are exactly like those which former generations revered; unchangeable as dogma they have been perpetuated from age to age. Art has no hold upon them, and in spite of their barbarousness and artlessness, it would be considered sacrilegious to improve upon them: the blacker, the smokier, the stiffer the Madonna, the greater the trust it inspires in the worshipper, whom it gazes upon with its dark eyes fixed like eternity.

It ought to be said that the shops of the Stchoukine Dvor, in which these images are made, are analogous to the manufacturers of Épinal wood-engravings with

us; the old style has taken refuge there with popular routine. At St. Isaac's and in other modern churches and chapels the artists, while they have preserved the general aspect and consecrated attitude, have not hesitated to give to their Madonnas the fullest ideal beauty of which they were capable. They have also done away with the brown complexion of the fierce bearded saints, and substitute human colours. From the point of view of science this is no doubt better, but it is possible that the religious effect has also been diminished. The Russo-Byzantine style with its gold backgrounds, symmetrical forms, and overlaying of metals and stones, lends itself admirably to church decoration; it is a mysterious and supernatural art quite in harmony with its destination.

The dealers in images are neater in their dress than their neighbours the leather-sellers; they generally wear the old Russian costume, a blue or green cloth caftan, closed with a button near the shoulder, and drawn in at the waist by a narrow belt; heavy, black leather boots; the hair parted in the centre, flowing long on either side of the face, but cut short at the back to show the neck, and thick blond or hazel-brown curly beards. Many have handsome, serious,

intelligent, sweet faces, and might pass for the Christs that they sell, if Byzantine art allowed the imitation of nature in devotional paintings. When they see you stopping before their stall they politely invite you to enter, and even if you purchase a few trifles only they will show you everything in their shop, and, not without a certain pride, draw your special attention to the richest and best-wrought articles.

Most interesting indeed to a stranger are these thoroughly Russian shops; he can easily be taken in by purchasing as an antique an absolutely modern article; in Russia, however, antiquity is no older than yesterday, and when it is a question of religious representation, the same forms are invariably repeated. What connoisseurs even might mistake for the work of a Greek monk of the ninth or tenth century, often comes from the studio next door, the gold varnish being scarcely dry.

It is entertaining to note the naïve and pious admiration of the moujiks who pass through the street, which might be called the sacred street of the Stchoukine Dvor. In spite of the cold they remain in ecstasies before the Madonnas and saints, and dream of owning

a painting like that, to hang in the light of a lamp in a corner of their log-cabins; but they finally depart considering the purchase beyond their means. Some however, who are better off, enter after having felt the small bundle of paper roubles in their purse to see whether it is thick enough; and then emerge after much bargaining, carrying their purchase carefully wrapped up. Accounts are kept in Chinese fashion, with an abacus.

But everybody does not go to the Stchoukine Dvor to buy. Many go to saunter there, and a very varied crowd throngs the streets; moujiks in tulupes, soldiers in gray overcoats, elbow society men in pelisses, and antiquarians looking for fine incunables, which are becoming rarer and rarer; for simplicity has abandoned the bazaar, and for fear of making a mistake dealers ask extravagant prices for the least trifle; regret at having formerly sold fairly cheap some rare object the value of which they were ignorant of, has made them uncommonly suspicious.

Almost everything is to be found in this lumber place: old books have their particular quarter, French, English, German books, books from every country in the world are stranded there on the snow, among

odd Russian volumes, soiled, stained, worm-eaten. Amid much trash investigators occasionally come upon an incunable, a *princeps* edition, a volume out of print, which has reached the Stchoukine Dvor after a series of adventures that might form the subject of a mimic Odyssey. Some of the dealers cannot read, but they are nevertheless very well acquainted with their books.

There are also shops for the sale of engravings and plain or coloured lithographs, in which are frequently to be found portraits of Alexander I, Emperor Nicholas, Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, great dignitaries and generals of preceding reigns, drawn by hands more zealous than skilful, and which give a very curious notion of the august personages. Of course "The Four Parts of the World," "The Four Seasons," "The Proposal of Marriage," "The Wedding," "The Retiring of the Bride," "The Rising of the Bride," and the hideous daubs of our Rue Saint-Jacques are met with in great numbers.

Among the idlers and purchasers women are in the minority. With us it would be the opposite. Russian women, although nothing compels them to do so, appear to have preserved the Eastern habit of seclusion; they go out but little,— scarcely does one see here and

there a female moujik with her handkerchief knotted under her chin, her felt or cloth wrap put on like a man's overcoat, over thick skirts, and heavy boots of greasy leather, trampling through the snow, in which she leaves prints that it is difficult to suppose made by a member of the fair sex. The other women who stop at the stalls are Germans or foreigners. In the shops of the Stchoukine Dvor, as in the bazaar at Smyrna or Constantinople, it is men who sell; I do not recollect having seen a single Russian saleswoman.

The street of second-hand furniture would furnish matter for a course on domestic economy, and much information upon private Russian life to a man who could make out from the more or less well-preserved remnants the histories of their former owners. Every style is represented there; by-gone fashions form regular stratifications; every epoch has superimposed in regular layers its forms that have become ridiculous. The great sofas of green leather, genuine Russian furniture, are most often met with. In another quarter are trunks, valises, karzines, and other travelling articles, piled up half-way out into the street, and almost buried under the snow; then old pans, old iron, broken jugs,

cracked wooden platters, worn-out utensils; in a word, things that are nameless in every tongue, rags about to be transformed into lint, and falling under the jurisdiction of the rag-man alone.

I have described the picturesque side of the Stchoukine Dvor, as it is the most interesting. There are also covered galleries bordered by shops containing goods of all kinds: smoked soudras for the long Greek Lent, olives, white butter like that of Constantinople, which comes from Odessa, green apples, red berries which are made into tarts, new furniture, clothing, shoes, stoves, and jewelry for the common people. That is still interesting, but it is not singular like the Oriental bazaar scattered amid the snow.

ST. ISAAC'S

WHEN the traveller who has proceeded up the Gulf of Finland, nears St. Petersburg, the first object upon which his glance rests is the dome of St. Isaac's, placed upon the skyline of the city like a golden mitre. If the sky is clear and the sunlight strikes the dome, the effect is magnificent. The first impression is the correct one, the one to be remembered. The church of St. Isaac's shines in the very first rank among the religious edifices which adorn the capital of all the Russias. Of modern construction and recently inaugurated, it may be considered a superhuman effort of contemporary architecture. Seldom has so short a time elapsed between the laying of the foundation stone and that of the coping stone.

An all-powerful will which nothing could resist, not even material obstacles, and which did not hesitate at any sacrifice, is mainly responsible for this miracle of celerity. Begun in 1819 under Alexander I, continued steadily under Nicholas, and completed under Alexander

II, in 1855, St. Isaac's is a complete temple finished internally and externally, of absolute unity of style, bearing its fixed date and its author's name. It is not, like many cathedrals, the slow product of time, a crystallisation of centuries in which each epoch has, as it were, secreted its own stalactite, and which too often the sap of faith, stopped or slowed in its course, has been unable to traverse to the end. The symbolical crane, that surmounts unfinished churches, such as the cathedrals of Cologne and Seville, never figured upon St. Isaac's: uninterrupted labour has brought it in less than forty years to the point of perfection visible to-day.

The aspect of the church recalls St. Peter's in Rome, the Pantheon of Agrippa, St. Paul's in London, St. Geneviève's in Paris, and the Dome of the Invalides. As the architect, Ricard de Montferrand, had to erect a church with a cupola, he was bound to study that kind of buildings, and to profit, while maintaining his own originality, by the experience of his forerunners; he chose for his dome the most elegant curve, the one which at the same time offers the greatest resistance; he crowned it with a diadem of pillars and placed it between four belfries,—borrowing some beauty from each different style.

Considering the regular simplicity of the plan, which the eye and the mind grasp without difficulty, it could scarcely be suspected that St. Isaac's, though apparently so homogeneous, contains fragments of an older church, which had to be preserved and utilised. It was dedicated to the same patron saint, and it was made historically venerable by the names of Peter the Great, Catherine II, and Paul I, who had all contributed more or less to its splendour, though none of them had been able to complete it. The plan of St. Isaac the Dalmatian, a saint of the Greek liturgy who has no relation with the patriarch of the Old Testament, is in the form of a cross, the four branches of which are of equal length,— differing in this respect from the Latin cross, the lower branch of which is longer. As it was necessary to orientate the church towards the East, and to preserve the Ikonostas which had already been consecrated, as well as to place the principal portico, which is exactly repeated on the other façade, opposite the Neva and the statue of Peter the Great, it was impossible to put the main entrance opposite the sanctuary. The two entrances, which correspond to the two monumental porticoes, are lateral as regards the Ikonostas; opposite each opens a door leading into a small octo-

style portico, with one row of pillars, symmetrically reproduced at the other end. The Greek ritual requires this arrangement, which the architect had to accept and harmonise with the aspect of the building, the side façade of which could not be placed opposite the river, from which it is separated by a broad square; hence the arms of the gilded crosses that surmount the dome and the belfries are not parallel to the façades, but to the Ikonostas; so that the church is orientated in two different ways — the one ecclesiastical, the other architectural. But this discord, unavoidable under the conditions, is concealed with such skill that it takes much attention and a careful examination to note it; internally it is impossible to suspect it; it was only assiduous study of the church that enabled me to mark it.

From the corner of the Boulevard of the Admiralty, St. Isaac's appears in all its magnificence, and the whole building may be viewed from this point; the principal façade shows in its entirety, as well as one of the side porticoes; three of the four belfries are visible, and the dome stands out against the heavens with its pillared gallery, its golden cap, and its bold lantern topped by the symbol of salvation.

At the first glance the effect is most satisfying. The possibly too severe, too sober, too classical lines of the building are happily relieved by the richness of the materials, the finest which human piety ever employed in the construction of a temple: gold, marble, bronze, and granite. Without falling into the medley of colours of systematically polychrome architecture, St. Isaac's has borrowed from those superb materials a harmonious variety of tints, the charm of which is augmented by their sincerity, by their reality. There is nothing painted, nothing sham, nothing in that wealth that lies to God. Massive granite supports eternal bronze; the walls are overlaid with indestructible marble; pure gold shines in the crosses, upon the dome and the belfries, imparting to the building the Oriental and Byzantine character of the Greek church.

St. Isaac's rests upon a substructure of granite, which, in my opinion, ought to have been higher; not that it is out of harmony with the edifice, but that, isolated as it is in the centre of a square bordered by palaces and tall houses, the monument would have gained in perspective by being raised at the base; so much the more that a long horizontal line tends to curve in the centre, a truth which Greek art recognised when, starting from

the central point, it slightly sloped the architrave of the Parthenon. A great square, however level it may be, always appears somewhat concave in the centre; it is this optical effect that causes St. Isaac's, in spite of the genuine harmony of the proportions, to appear too low. This disadvantage, which is not excessive, could easily be remedied by making the ground slope slightly from the foot of the cathedral to the four faces of the square.

Each portico, corresponding to each of the four arms of the Greek cross of the plan, is reached by three colossal granite steps intended for giants and made without thought or care for human legs; but at three of the peristyles, which have doors, the steps are cut and divided into nine lower steps opposite each entrance. The fourth portico is not so arranged; the Ikonostas being placed against the inner wall there can be no door there, and the granite staircase, worthy of the Temple of Karnac, is unbroken, save that on either side, in the angle near the wall, the steps are each cut into three other narrow ones, to give access to the platform of the portico.

The whole of this substructure, which is of reddish-gray spotted Finland granite, is set, dressed, and polished

with Egyptian perfection, and for many centuries will bear without yielding the temple that rests upon it.

The principal portico, which faces the Neva, is, like all the others, octostyle, that is, composed of a row of eight pillars of the Corinthian order, formed of a single stone, with bronze bases and capitals. Two groups of four similar pillars, placed at the back, support the caissons of the ceiling, and the roof of the triangular pediment, the architrave of which rests upon the outer row. There are altogether sixteen columns, which form an exceedingly rich and majestic peristyle. The portico of the opposite façade is exactly similar. The two others, also octostyle, have a single row of pillars of the same order and the same materials; they were added to the original plan during the building of the cathedral, and quite fulfil their purpose, which is to adorn the somewhat bare sides of the edifice. In the pediments are set bronze *bassi-relievi*, which I shall describe when I come to the details of the edifice, the main lines of which I am engaged in drawing.

After ascending the nine steps cut in the three great granite steps, the last of which forms a stylobate for the pillars, one is struck by the huge size of these pillars, the elegant proportions of which conceal their

dimensions from a distance. These prodigious monoliths are not less than seven feet in diameter by fifty-six feet in height; seen close by they resemble towers, circled with bronze and crowned with brazen vegetation. There are forty-eight of them in the four porticoes, exclusive of those on the cupola, which, it is true, are only thirty feet high. Next to Pompey's pillar and the Column erected in remembrance of Emperor Alexander II, they are the largest stones ever cut, turned, and polished by the hand of man. According to the way the light falls upon them a ray of bluish light like a flash of steel shimmers along their surface, which is smoother than a mirror, and by its unbroken line, which no projection interrupts, proves the homogeneousness of the monstrous block, a fact the mind finds it difficult to accept. It is impossible to describe the tremendous impression of strength, power, and eternity mutely expressed by these giant pillars, that rise straight up and bear upon their Atlas heads the comparatively light weight of the pediments and statues. They are as durable as the bones of the earth itself, and are resolved to vanish only when it does.

The one hundred and four monolithic pillars employed in the building of St. Isaac's were brought from

quarries situated in two small islands in the Gulf of Finland between Viborg and Fredericksham. Finland, as is well known, is one of the countries on earth richest in granite, and no doubt some pre-historic cosmic cataclysm accumulated there in enormous masses that beautiful material which is as indestructible as nature itself.

On either side of the projection formed by the portico there is in the marble wall a monumental window; the cornice is ornamented with bronze and supported by two small granite pillars, with bronze bases and capitals. It has also a balcony with balustrade supported on brackets. The main divisions of the design are marked by denticulated cornices, surmounted by attics, the projections casting pleasant shadows; at the corners are fluted Corinthian pillars topped by an angel standing with folded wings.

Two quadrangular campaniles projecting from the main line of the building at each corner of the façade repeat the motives of the monumental window, with their granite pillars, their bronze capitals, their balustraded balconies, and their triangular pediments. Through the arched openings are seen the bells hung without the use of beams, by means of a peculiar

mechanism. A round gilded cap, surmounted by a cross resting on a crescent, tops these campaniles; which are open to the light and whence escape the harmonious vibrations of the bronze. It is needless to add that these two belfries are reproduced identically on the other façade. Indeed, from the spot where we are standing one can see shining the third cupola; the fourth belfry alone being concealed by the dome.

At the two extremities of the façades kneeling angels are suspending wreaths on candelabra of antique form. On the acroters are placed groups of single figures representing apostles. This wealth of statues aptly enlivens the skyline of the edifice and pleasantly breaks the horizontal lines.

These are, broadly, the principal parts of what may be called the first story of the building. Let us pass to the dome, which springs boldly into the heavens from a square platform which forms the roof of the church.

A round base, divided by three deep sunken mouldings, serves as a base to the tower, and as a stylobate to the twenty-four granite monoliths thirty feet high, with bronze capitals and bases, that surround the top

of the dome with a rotunda of pillars, forming an aerial diadem on which the light plays and gleams. Between these pillars are twelve windows, and upon their capitals rests a semicircular cornice surmounted by a balustrade, with twenty-four pediments on which stand, with fluttering wings, twenty-four angels bearing the instruments of the Passion, or attributes of the celestial hierarchy.

The dome rises above this angelic crown, placed on the front of the cathedral. Twenty-four windows are placed between an equal number of pillars, and from the cornice swells the vast cupola, blazing with gold and striated with mouldings in relief, which spring in line with the columns. An octagonal lantern, flanked by small pillars and gilded all over, surmounts the cupola and ends in a colossal open-work cross triumphantly planted upon the crescent.

In architecture, as in music, there are square rhythms, symmetrically harmonious, which charm the eye and the ear without troubling it. The mind anticipates with pleasure the return of the motive at a place marked beforehand. St. Isaac's produces that effect. It is developed like a beautiful phrase of ecclesiastical music, that fulfils the promises of its pure, classical

theme, and it does not offend the eye by any dissonance. The rose-coloured columns or pillars form choirs of equal numbers, singing the same melody. On the four façades of the edifice, the Corinthian acanthus blooms in green bronze on every capital. Bands of granite extend over the friezes like bearing stones, below which the statues correspond by contrasts or resemblances of attitude which recall the logical inversions of a fugue; and the great cupola sends up into the heavens the highest note of all between the four campaniles that accompany it. No doubt the motive is simple, like all motives drawn from Greek or Roman antiquity, but it is splendidly carried out, producing a wonderful symphony in marble, granite, bronze, and gold.

If the selection of this style of architecture inspires any regret to those who believe that the Byzantine and Gothic styles are better suited to the poetry and the needs of Christian worship, it should be remembered that this one is eternal and universal, consecrated by ages and by human admiration, and above time and fashion.

The classical austerity of the plan adopted by the architect of St. Isaac's did not allow him to employ

for the exterior of the temple, with its severely antique lines, fanciful designs in which the carver's chisel revels, wreaths, foliage, trophies, with children, genii, attributes that have often little relation to the building, and which serve merely to mask empty spaces. Save for the acanthus and a few ornaments required by the order of architecture, statuary forms the whole decoration of St. Isaac's; *bassi-relievi*, groups of statues in bronze, that is all, — a superb sobriety.

Keeping to the point of view that I selected, at the corner of Admiralty Boulevard, in order to sketch rapidly the general aspect of the building, I shall now proceed to describe the *bassi-relievi* and statues as seen from this spot; making the round of the church later.

The *bas-relief* of the northern pediment, the one which faces the Neva, represents "The Resurrection of Christ." It is by Lemaire, the sculptor of the pediment of the Madeleine in Paris. The composition is grand, monumental, decorative, and thoroughly fulfils its purpose. The resuscitated Christ springs from the tomb, holding the labarum; He is in an ascending position, in the very centre of the triangle, so that the figure is fully treated. On the left of the radiant apparition, a seated angel repels with a compelling

gesture, the Roman soldiers to whom the guard of the tomb had been intrusted, and whose attitudes express surprise, fear, and a desire to prevent the predicted miracle. On the right two angels, standing, receive with reassuring kindness the holy women who have come to weep and pour out perfumes on the tomb of Jesus. Magdalen has sunk on her knees, overcome with grief, for she has not yet beheld the miracle. Martha and Mary, who had come sadly bearing boxes of nard and cinnamon to pay the honours due to the dead, watch the ascension into glory of the luminous body, as one of the angels points to Christ. The composition forms a good pyramid, and the bowed attitudes, rendered necessary by the diminution of the height at the outer extremities of the pediment, explain themselves naturally. The relief of the figures is calculated, according to their position, to produce strong shadows and clean contours, which do not trouble the eye; a happy mingling of round and flat produces as much perspective as may reasonably be asked of a *bas-relief* without interfering with the great architectural lines.

Below the pediment in the granite entablature of the frieze, broken by a marble tablet, is cut an inscription

in Slavonic characters, the liturgical characters used by the Greek Church; this inscription, which is in letters of gilt bronze, means: "The Czar shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord."

Upon the acroters, at the three angles of the pediment, are placed the Evangelist St. John and the two apostles St. Peter and St. Paul; the Evangelist, who occupies the summit, is seated and is grouped with the symbolical eagle; in his right hand he holds a pen, and in his left a papyrus. St. Peter and St. Paul are known, the one by his keys, the other by the great sword upon which he leans.

Under the peristyle above the main entrance, a great bronze *bas-relief*, arched in its upper part like the vaulting which frames it in, represents "Christ crucified between the two Thieves." At the foot of the Tree of Sorrows the Holy Women are mourning and fainting. In one corner the Roman soldiers are casting lots for the tunic of the Divine Victim; in the other, awakened by the last cry of Jesus, the dead are rising and pushing aside the broken stones that closed their tomb.

In the two side doors, semicircular in form, are seen, on the left, "Christ bearing His Cross," and on the right "The Entombment." The Crucifixion is by

Vitali, the other two *bassi-relievi* by Baron Klodt. The great monumental bronze doors are adorned with *bassi-relievi* in the following order: on the lintel, "Christ's entry into Jerusalem," on the left, "Ecce Homo," and on the right, "The Flagellation." Below, on oblong panels are saints in ecclesiastical vestments, St. Nicholas and St. Isaac each occupying a niche, the arch of which is in the form of a shell. In the small panels are two small kneeling angels bearing in the centre of a cartouche a Greek cross with rays and inscriptions. The drama of the Passion in all its phases is pictured under the portico; the apotheosis beams radiantly upon the pediment.

Let us now pass to the eastern portico, the great *bas-relief* on which is also by Lemaire. It represents an incident in the life of St. Isaac of Dalmatia, the patron of the cathedral. The Emperor Valens, leaving Constantinople to meet the Goths in battle, was stopped by St. Isaac, who dwelt in a cell near the city, and who foretold that the Emperor would fail in his enterprise because he was at war with God in helping the Arians. The angry Emperor caused the saint to be loaded with chains, and thrown into prison, promising him death if his prophecy should prove false, and freedom if it should

prove true. The Emperor was slain on that expedition, and Saint Isaac, being set free, was greatly honoured by Emperor Theodosius.

Valens is mounted on a horse that rears, terrified by the saint, who is standing in the centre of the road. It is not easy to make a successful equestrian statue in high relief, and there are very few that are entirely satisfactory. In *bas-relief*, the difficulty is increased, but Lemaire has overcome it very successfully: his horse, which is lifelike, though free from too many realistic details, as is proper in monumental statuary, bears its rider handsomely; the figure of the latter, thus raised up, has a classical effect, and dominates, without any hint of artifice, the groups that surround it. The saint has just spoken his prediction, and the orders of the Emperor are being carried out; soldiers are loading with chains the arms of the saint, outstretched in supplication and menace. It was difficult to conciliate more skilfully the double action in the subject. Behind Valens are crowding warriors unsheathing their swords, seizing their bucklers, putting on their armour, thus carrying out the idea of an army setting out to war. Behind Saint Isaac stands the army, more powerful in Heaven, of unfortunates, beggars, and women

pressing their nurslings to their breasts. The composition has breadth, truth, and life; nor has the restriction imposed by the lowering of the triangle hurt the outer groups.

On the acroter of the pediment stand three statues; in the centre St. Luke, the Evangelist, with his ox lying down by him; he is painting the first portrait of the Virgin, the sacred model of Byzantine images. On either side are St. Simeon with his saw, and St. James with a book. The Slavic inscription means literally, "In Thee, O Lord, we trust, secure of eternity."

As the Ikonostas rests against the interior wall of this portico, there is no door and consequently there are no *bassi-relievi* under the colonnade, which is ornamented merely with engaged Corinthian pilasters.

The southern pediment was intrusted to Vitali. It represents "The Adoration of the Magi," a subject which the great masters of painting have made it almost impossible for painters to treat, and which modern statuary has rarely attempted on account of the number of figures it requires, but which did not frighten the artless Gothic sculptors when patiently carving their triptychs. It is a showy composition, elegantly arranged, rather too facile in its fulness perhaps, but

which attracts the eye. The Blessed Virgin, seated in the folds of her veil, which the ingenious sculptor has parted like the curtains of a tabernacle, presents to the adoration of the Magi kings, bowing or kneeling at her feet in attitudes of Oriental respect, the little Child who is to redeem the world, and whose divinity she already foresees. The miraculous birth heralded by apparitions, the kings who have come from the depths of Asia, guided by a star, to kneel before the cradle, bringing vases of gold and boxes of perfumes, all these things trouble the heart of the Virgin Mother; she is almost afraid of the Child who is God. As for St. Joseph, leaning on a stone, he takes a very small part in the scene, accepting these strange events with submissive faith, without quite understanding them.

In the suites of the kings, Gaspar, Melchior, Balthazar, are numerous splendid personages, officers, bearers of presents, slaves, who fill abundantly the two ends of the composition. Behind them shepherds clad in goatskins are making their way with timid curiosity, and worshipping from afar; between two groups an ox shows its kindly face with shining nostrils. But why has the ass been suppressed? It also drew its mouthful of straw from the manger, and it also warmed with

its breath the future Saviour of the world, who had just been born in the stable. Art has not the right to be prouder than the Deity. Jesus did not despise the ass, for it was upon a colt, the foal of an ass, that he made his entry into Jerusalem.

In accordance with the interchanging rhythm of the decoration, three statues stand upon the acroters of this façade: at the summit St. Matthew, writing to the dictation of the angel; at the two ends St. Andrew, with his saltire cross, and St. Philip with his book and pastoral cross. The inscription on the frieze reads: "My house shall be called the house of prayer."

Now let us enter under the peristyle, arranged in the same manner as the northern one. Above the main door, in the tympanum of the vaulting, is a great galvano-plastic *bas-relief* like that of "The Crucifixion," which represents "The Adoration of the Shepherds." It is a familiar repetition of the preceding scene. The central group is much the same, though the Virgin turns with a gesture of more sympathetic *abandon* towards the shepherds, bringing to the new-born Child their rustic offerings, than she does towards the Magi kings, laying their rich presents at His feet. She is not playing the queen, and is gentle to these humble, simple-

hearted, poor people, who are giving the best they have. She presents her child to them with full trust, undoing the swaddling-clothes to show them how strong He is. The shepherds bowing or kneeling, admire and worship, full of faith in the angel's words; they are arriving and crowding up, the woman with a basket of fruit on her shoulder, the child with a pair of doves; and above, the angels are flying around the star that marks the stable of Bethlehem.

On the side doors, also in semicircular form, are two *bassi-relievi*, that on the left representing "The Angel announcing the Birth of Christ to the Shepherds," the other "The Massacre of the Innocents;" both are by Laganovsky.

On the lintel of the great bronze door is "The Presentation in the Temple;" on the two leaves "The Flight into Egypt" and "Jesus Christ among the Doctors;" below, in the shell-shaped niches, a warrior saint and a warrior angel, St. Alexander and St. Michael; lower down, on the inferior panels, little angels supporting crosses. This portico contains in its decoration the whole poem of the Nativity and childhood of Christ, as the other contains the whole drama of the Passion.

ST. ISAAC'S

On the eastern pediment we have seen St. Isaac persecuted by Emperor Valens; on the western one we behold his triumph, if such a word can be used of a humble saint. Emperor Theodosius the Great is returning victorious from the war against the barbarians, and near the Golden Gate St. Isaac, honourably freed from captivity, stands before him in his wretched monk's frock bound with a chaplet; holding in his left hand a double cross, he raises the right in blessing over the Emperor's head. Theodosius bends reverently; his arm, placed around the Empress Flaccilla, draws her with him as if he sought to make her a sharer in the saint's blessing. The thought is charming and rendered with remarkable skill; the majestic faces of the Emperor and the Empress suggest august resemblances. At the foot of the laurel-crowned Theodosius are seen eagles and the emblems of victory. On the right of the group, as the spectator looks at it, are warriors in attitudes of the liveliest fervour, bending and kneeling on the ground, lowering fasces and axes before the cross; in the middle distance a personage with contracted features and gestures of annoyance and fury appears to be going away and to leave St. Isaac, whose influence has predominated, in posses-

sion of the field. It is Demophilus, the chief of the Arians, who had hoped to seduce Theodosius and to make the heresy prevail. At one end is seen, with her child, the Edessa woman whose sudden apparition caused the troops sent to persecute the Christians to retreat. On the left a lady-in-waiting of the Empress, in rich garments, supports a poor paralytic woman, symbolical of the charity which reigns in this Christian order. A little child playing with all the graceful suppleness of its age, contrasts with the stiff immobility of the patient. In the angle of the bas-relief, by a synchronism admissible in idealized statuary, is seen the architect of the church, draped in antique fashion, and presenting a miniature model of the cathedral which in later years will arise under the patronage of St. Isaac. This fine composition, the groups of which are symmetrically and skilfully balanced and co-ordinated, is by Vitali.

In this portico, simpler than those on the north and south façades, there are no semicircular or arched *bassi-relievi*. It is pierced with a single door opening opposite the Ikonostas; this bronze door is divided like those I have already described. The bas-relief on the lintel represents the "Sermon on the Mount;" in the

upper compartments of the leaves are set the "Resurrection of Lazarus" and "Jesus healing the Paralytic;" St. Peter and St. Paul occupy the shell niches; below, angels support the symbol of the redemption of man. The vine and corn, the eucharistic symbols, form the motives of the ornamentation of this and the other gates. St. Mark accompanied by the lion, which Venice took for arms, writes his Gospel on the summit of the pediment; the extremities of which are adorned by St. Thomas carrying the square and stretching out the sceptical finger which he desired to put into the wounds of Christ before he would believe in the resurrection, — and St. Bartholomew with the instruments of his martyrdom, the wood-horse and the knife. On the tablet of the frieze is the following inscription: "To the King of Kings."

The archaic form of Slavonic characters lends itself to monumental inscriptions; it is ornamental, like Cufic and Arabic. There are other inscriptions under the peristyles and on the doors, expressing religious or mystical ideas; I have translated those only which are most visible.

It was Vitali who, with the help of Salemann and Bouilli, modelled all the carving of all the gates; the

evangelists and apostles on the acroters are also his work. These figures are not less than fifteen feet two inches in height; the angels kneeling by the candelabra are seventeen feet high, and the candelabra themselves twenty feet in height. The angels, with their great outspread wings, resemble mystic eagles that have swooped down from on high upon the four corners of the edifice.

I have already said that a flock of angels has alighted upon the crown of the dome; the height at which they are placed prevents their features from being seen in detail, but the sculptor has given them elegant and graceful profiles, which are easily seen from below.

Thus on the cornices, the cupola, the acroters, the attics, the entablatures of the building, but exclusive of the half-engaged figures on the pediments, the *bassi-relievi* on the vaultings and on the hemicycles, and the figures on the gates, there are fifty-two statues three times larger than life, which form for St. Isaac's an everlasting people of bronze in varied attitudes, but subject, like an architectural chorus, to the cadences of linear rhythm.

Before entering the church, which I have sketched as faithfully as the lack of words allows, I must guard

against the belief that because of its noble, pure, severe lines, its sobriety of ornamentation, and the austerely antique taste of the architecture, the cathedral of St. Isaac's, with its perfect regularity, has the coldly monotonous and slightly gruesome aspect of the architecture called classical for want of a more accurate expression. The gilding of the cupolas, and the rich variety of the materials used in the building, have preserved it from this defect; while the climate colours it with plays of light with unexpected effects, which make it thoroughly Russian instead of Roman. The fairies of the North flutter around the noble monument and nationalise it, without depriving it of its antique and grandiose aspect.

Winter in Russia has a poetry of its own; its rigours are compensated by extremely picturesque, beauteous effects and aspects. The snow frosts with silver the golden cupolas, outlines with a shining line the entablatures and the pediments, puts white touches upon the brazen acanthus, fixes luminous points upon the projections and statues, and modifies all the relations of the tones by magical transpositions. At this season St. Isaac's acquires a thoroughly local character. It has superb colouring, whether it stands out picked out in white against a background of gray sky, or whether its

profile shows against one of those turquoise and rose skies which shine over St. Petersburg when the cold is dry and the snow cracks under the feet like glass powder. Sometimes, after a thaw, the icy wind in one night freezes upon the mass of the monument the moisture that has exuded from the granite and the marble; a network of pearls, finer and rounder than dew-drops on plants, envelops the gigantic pillars of the peristyle; the reddish granite turns to tenderest rose, and its smooth surface acquires a bloom like that of a peach or of a plum-tree blossom; it becomes transformed into a new and unknown material like unto the precious stones of which the Heavenly Jerusalem is built. The crystallisation of vapour covers the edifice with a diamond dust that sends out flashes and bluish gleams when touched by a sunbeam, making it look like a cathedral of gems in the City of God.

Every hour of the day has its own mirage. When one looks at St. Isaac's in the morning from the quay of the Neva, it appears the colour of the amethyst and the smoky topaz, amid an aureole of milky and rosy splendours. The whitish mists which float at its base separate it from earth and make it float upon an archipelago of vapour. At night, when seen from the

corner of the Little Morskaïa, and when the light falls in a particular way, the windows lighted up by the rays of the setting sun, it seems to be illuminated and burning within, and the great windows burn unconsumed in the sombre walls. Sometimes in foggy weather, when the clouds are low, they descend upon the cupola, and cap it as if it were a mountain summit. I have seen — and a wondrous sight it was — the lantern on the upper half of the dome disappear in a bank of fog; the cloud cutting with its band of mist the gilded hemisphere of the high tower, gave to the cathedral a prodigious height and the air of a Christian Babel, seeking to find but not to brave in the heavens Him without whom builders build but in vain.

Night, which in other climates casts its opaque shades upon buildings, cannot entirely extinguish St. Isaac's; its dome remains visible under the black dais of heaven, with tones of pale gold like an immense semi-luminous ball; no darkness, not even that of the most sombre nights of December, can prevail against it; it is always seen above the city, and if the dwellings of men are lost in the shadows of sleep the house of God shines and seems to watch over them. When the darkness is less intense, when the scintillation of the stars and the faint

light of the Milky Way allow the outlines of objects to become visible, the great masses of the cathedral show out majestically with mysterious solemnity. Its polished pillars are revealed by an unexpected reflection, and upon the attics the faintly visible statues seem to be terrestrial sentinels intrusted with the guard of the sacred edifice. What is left of light in the heavens concentrates upon one point of the dome with such intensity that the nocturnal passer-by may take the single golden spot for a lighted lamp. At times an even more wondrous effect is produced,—luminous touches flame at the extremity of each of the mouldings which divide the dome, and cover it with a crown of stars, a sidereal diadem placed upon the golden tiara of the temple. A less scientific and more credulous age would take this for a miracle, so dazzling and inexplicable is this very natural effect.

If the moon is full and shows free from clouds, about the middle of the night, St. Isaac's assumes under its opaline light, ashen, silvery, bluish, violet tints of unimaginable delicacy; the rosy tones of the granite turn into a faint purple shade, the bronze draperies of the statues whiten like linen robes, the gilded cupolas and belfries are enriched by reflections like unto pale, trans-

parent amber; the snowy lines of the cornice here and there flash like spangles. The orb of night, in the depths of the steel-cold, blue Northern sky, seems to be looking at its own silvery face mirrored in the golden surface of the dome. The beam which results from this recalls the electrum the ancients made of gold and silver molten together.

From time to time the fairy beauties with which the North relieves the length of its icy nights, display their magnificence above the cathedral: the aurora borealis flashes up, behind the dark silhouette of the building, its mighty polar fireworks; an ever-shifting irradiation of light-waves, luminosity, and changing phosphorescent zones, blooms with a silvery, pearly, opaline, rosy splendour that dims the stars and makes the ever-radiant cupola seem black save for the one shining point, the golden lamp of the sanctuary, which nothing can eclipse.

I have endeavoured to paint St. Isaac's on winter days and nights, but the summer is no less rich in effects as novel as they are wonderful; on those long days, scarce interrupted by a short diaphanous hour of night, which is at once a twilight and a dawn, St. Isaac's, bathed in light, stands out with the majestic

clearness of a classical monument. The vanished mirage allows the superb reality to be seen; but, when the transparent shadows envelop the city, the sun continues to shine upon the colossal dome; from the far distant horizon, below which it plunges to emerge at once, its beams still strike the gilded cupola. So in mountain chains the highest peak remains illumined with a flash of sunshine, while the valleys below have long since disappeared in the mists of evening; but at last the light abandons the gilded peak and seems regretfully to reascend to heaven, while here the glorious light never leaves the dome. When all the stars in the sky are extinguished, there is still one blazing upon St. Isaac's.

Now that I have to the best of my power given you an idea of the exterior of the cathedral in its general aspects, let us enter, for the interior is no less superb.

The ordinary entrance to St. Isaac's is through the southern door, but it is well to try to enter by the western door, opposite the Ikonostas; it is from this point that the building shows to the greatest advantage. No sooner has one stepped within than one is filled with amazement. The mighty grandeur of the architecture, the profusion of the most precious marbles, the

brilliancy of the gilding, the fresco tints of the mural paintings, the shimmering of the polished pavement, in which everything is reflected, — all combine to produce a dazzling impression, especially if the glance rests, as it must inevitably do, upon the Ikonostas: a marvellous edifice, a temple within a temple, a façade of gold, malachite, and lapis-lazuli, with gates of massive silver; and yet this is only the veil of the sanctuary. The eye is forcibly attracted to it, whether the open doors allow one to perceive the sparklingly transparent colossal Christ in painted glass, or whether, closed, they merely show in the round bay the purple curtain which seems to have been dyed in the blood of Jesus.

The interior arrangement of the edifice is exceedingly simple. Three naves correspond to the three doors of the Ikonostas, and they are cut transversely by the nave which forms the arms of the cross, completed externally by the projecting porticoes. The dome rises at the point of intersection; at the corners, four other domes balance symmetrically and mark the architectural rhythm.

Upon a substructure of marble rises the Corinthian order with fluted pillars and pilasters, and bases and capitals of gilded bronze and ormolu, which forms the

decoration of the building. This order, applied to the walls and to the massive pillars which support the vaulting and the roof, is surmounted by an attic cut by pilasters, forming panels and frames for paintings. On this attic rest the archivolts, the pediments of which are decorated with devotional subjects.

The spaces on the walls between the pillars and pilasters are overlaid, from the substructure to the cornice, with white marble, on which are outlined panels and compartments in marble of various colours: Genoa green, speckled Sienna yellow, various jaspers, red Finland porphyry, — the finest materials, in short, which the richest quarries could furnish. Niches supported by brackets contain paintings and break pleasantly the plane surfaces. The roses and modillions of the soffits are of gilded galvano-plastic bronze and stand well out from the marble compartments. The ninety-six pillars and pilasters have been brought from the Tvidi quarries, which furnish a fine marble veined with gray and rose. The white marble comes from Seravezza, and Michael Angelo preferred it to the Carrara marble: I need say no more, for the architect of St. Peter's and the sculptor of the Tomb of the Medici was a connoisseur in marble if there ever was one.

Now let us come to the cūpola, which opes above the visitor's head its aerial abyss. It is of an unchanging solidity, in which iron, bronze, brick, granite, and marble combine their well-nigh eternal resistance, in accordance with mathematical laws evolved by careful calculation. The dome, from the flooring to the lantern vaulting, is two hundred and ninety-six feet and eight inches high, or forty-two sagens two arshins in Russian measures. The length of the building is two hundred and eighty-eight feet and eight inches, or thirty-nine sagens two arshins; and the breadth is one hundred and forty-nine feet and eight inches, or forty-one sagens three arshins.

In the very top of the lantern a colossal Holy Ghost displays, at an immense height, its white wings in a glory; lower down there is a semi-cupola with golden palm branches on an azure ground. Then comes the great spherical vault of the dome, its upper opening bordered by a cornice with a frieze adorned with gilded wreaths and angels' heads. The base rests upon the entablature of the order of twelve fluted Corinthian pilasters, between which are twelve windows; an imitation balustrade, which forms a transition between the architectural work and the painting, crowns this entab-

lature; and in the luminosity of a vast sky shines the great composition representing the "Triumph of the Virgin."

This painting, like all those on the dome, was intrusted to Brulof, known in Paris by his painting of the "Last Day of Pompeii," which figured in one of the exhibitions. He deserved to be chosen, but ill health, followed by premature death, did not allow him to execute this important work in person; he only managed to draw the cartoons, so that, carefully as his ideas and directions were followed, it is to be regretted that these paintings, so very well suited to their decorative destination, should not have had the advantage of the eye, the hand, and the genius of the master. No doubt he would have managed to impart to them all they now lack, — touch, colour, fire, everything, in a word, that comes up in the execution of the best-ordered work, and which a man of similar talent, carrying out another one's thought, is unable to put into it.

In order that my description may be somewhat orderly, let us face the Ikonostas; we shall thus have before us the group which forms the centre of this vast composition. The Blessed Virgin, enshrined in a glory, is seated on a golden throne, her eyes cast down, her

hands majestically crossed on her bosom; she seems, even in heaven, to submit to triumph rather than to accept it. She is the handmaiden of the Lord, *ancilla Domini*, and she yields to the apotheosis. On either side of the throne are St. John the Baptist, the Precursor, and St. John the well beloved disciple, known by his eagle. They both deserve their place of honour, for the one foretold the coming of Christ, the other followed Him to the Garden of Olives, was with Him during His Passion, and it was to Him that the dying God intrusted His Mother.

Above the throne flutter little angels bearing lilies, the symbol of purity. Great angels placed at intervals, with outspread wings, in bold, foreshortened poses, support the bank of clouds that bear the groups I shall now describe, beginning with the left of the Virgin as the spectator looks at her, and running around the cupola until we have got to the right and thus closed the cycle of the composition. One of these angels is armed with a long sword, the attribute of St. Paul, who is seen kneeling above him on a cloud, next to St. Peter, his head turned towards the Virgin; cherubs are opening the Epistles and playing with the golden keys of Paradise. Upon a cloud which floats above the

balustrade and forms an aerial base for the groups, is noticed, next to St. Peter and St. Paul, a white-bearded old man in the dress of a Byzantine monk; it is St. Isaac of Dalmatia, the patron saint of the cathedral. Near him stands St. Alexander Nevsky, wearing a breast-plate and a purple mantle; angels hold standards behind him, and upon a gilded disk the image of Christ recalls the service to religion rendered by the holy warrior.

The next group is composed of the three holy women, namely, Anna, mother of the Virgin, Elizabeth, mother of the Precursor, and Catherine, superbly dressed with an ermine mantle and brocade gown, and a crown on her head, — not because she belonged to a royal or princely house, but because she unites the triple crown of virginity, martyrdom, and science, so that her original name, Dorothy, was changed to that of Catherine, the Syriac root of which, "Cethar," means "crown;" her splendour therefore is allegorical. An angel placed under the crown holds fragments of the wheel, with curved teeth, the instruments of the saint's execution.

Separated by a small space from the group I have just described, a third cloud upbears St. Alexis, the man in God, wearing a monk's dress, and Emperor Con-

stantine, with gilded armour and purple mantle; by his side an angel carries the axe and fasces; another angel, placed behind, holds the badge of command, an ancient sword in its sheath.

The last group, nearest the Virgin's throne, represents St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra and patron saint of Russia, wearing a dalmatic and a green stole figured with gold crosses, gazing admiringly upon the Mother of God; he is surrounded by angels holding banners and sacred books. In these figures the patron saints of Russia and the imperial family are easily recognised. The mystic thought which underlies this immense composition, some two hundred and twenty-eight feet in length, is the "Triumph of the Church," symbolised by the Virgin.

The arrangement of the composition recalls somewhat that of the cupola of St. Geneviève, by Baron Gros. This is not a reproach to Brulof; such resemblances are unavoidable in devotional subjects, the main outlines of which are settled beforehand. Conforming himself to the intentions of the architect, much more so than some of the other artists engaged in decorating the church, Brulof, or the man who carried out his scheme of colours, avoided bright colours

and blacks, always objectionable in mural painting because they make holes in the architecture and give the figures a relief which spoils the lines of the building. These paintings and those which adorn the cathedral do not attempt to reproduce the hieratic, motionless, unchanging attitudes of Byzantine art, even when they are painted on gold backgrounds. De Montferrand very judiciously conceived that, as the church of which he was the architect borrowed its forms from the pure Greek or Roman style, the artists who were to be intrusted with the painting should draw their inspiration from the great Italian school, —the most expert and the most skilful in decorating religious buildings in this style. So the paintings in St. Isaac's are in no wise archaic, contrary to the customs of the Greek church, which readily conforms to the models fixed from the earliest days of the Greek church, and traditionally preserved by the painters of Mount Athos.

Twelve great gilded angels, performing the duty of caryatids, support brackets on which rest the bases of the pilasters that form the interior order of the dome and separate the windows; they are no less than twenty-one feet in height, and have been cast

in four pieces by the galvano-plastic process, the joints being quite invisible; in this way they have been made sufficiently light not to overburden the cupola, in spite of their dimensions. The crown of gilded angels, which are bathed in brilliant light and flash with metallic reflections, has an exceedingly rich effect; the figures are arranged in accordance with a certain conventional architectural line, but with sufficient variety of attitude and motion to avoid the monotony which would result from too rigorous uniformity. Various attributes, such as books, palms, crosses, scales, crowns, and trumpets, justify the slight differences of attitude, and indicate the celestial functions of these superb statues.

The spaces between the angels are filled by seated apostles and prophets, each with the symbol by which he is known. All these figures, broadly draped, and in very good style, stand out from a background of golden light of almost the same value. The general tone is clear, and as much as possible like that of frescoes.

The pendentives are occupied by four colossal evangelists. The artist endeavoured to give these figures the proud and violent attitudes favoured by the painter

of the Sistine Chapel. Pendentives, by their peculiar form, compel the forcing of the composition so as to confine it within their limits, and the constraint due to the frame-work is often profitable to the inspiration. These evangelists are very striking; by the winged lion is known St. Mark, who with one hand holds his Gospel, and with the other raised seems to be preaching or giving a blessing; a golden circle shines around his head; a full blue drapery falls over his knees; above him angels bear a cross. St. John, dressed in a green tunic and a red mantle, is writing upon a long papyrus-band unrolled by two angels near him; the mystic eagle flaps its wings and flashes apocalyptic glances. Leaning on the ox St. Luke gazes upon the portrait of the Virgin, the work of his brush, which the angels are holding before him. The labarum floats above the halo around his head. An orange-red drapery falls around him in broad masses. An angel companion of St. Matthew stands by the evangelist's side. The latter wears a violet tunic, a yellow mantle, and has a book in his hand. Against the dark sky which forms a background for this as well as the other figures, are flying cherubim, and sparkles a star.

On the points of the pendentives are set four pictures representing incidents in the Passion of Christ. In the one, Judas, preceding soldiers carrying lanterns and torches, gives to his Master the treacherous kiss which points Jesus out among the disciples; in the other, Christ, standing, is whipped by two executioners armed with knotted ropes; the third shows the Just Man whom the Jews have rejected in favour of Barabbas, and Who is led away from the prætorium to be handed over to the executioners, while Pontius Pilate on his tribunal washes his hands of the blood which has stained them forever. The fourth painting represents what the Italians call the Spasimo, the breaking down of the victim under the weight of the cross of torture, on the way to Calvary; the Virgin, the holy women, and St. John escort the Divine sufferer, in attitudes of grief.

In the attic of the transept is seen on the right, facing the Ikonostas, Pietro Bassine's "Sermon on the Mount." On a plateau in an elevated place, shaded by a few trees, Jesus, seated among the disciples, is preaching; a crowd has collected to listen to Him; the paralytics themselves have managed to reach the spot on their crutches; the sick are brought

on their beds, thirsting for the Word of God; the blind grope their way; women listen with all their heart; while in one corner Pharisees are disputing and arguing. The ordering of the composition is fine, and the well-distributed groups bring out the full importance of the figure of Christ placed in the centre. The two paintings on the sides have for subjects the Parables of "The Sower" and "The Good Samaritan." In the one Jesus is walking through the fields with His disciples, and shows them the sower sowing the grain, with the birds of heaven flying above his head. In the other, the good Samaritan, who has dismounted, is pouring oil upon the wounds of the young man left by the roadside, whose call for help the Pharisee would not listen to. The first painting is by Nikitine, the second by Sazanof. In the vaulting in the panel, framed with rich ornaments, cherubs are holding a book against the background of sky.

Opposite the "Sermon on the Mount," in the attic at the other end of the transept, is a vast composition by Pluchart, "The Miracle of the Loaves." Jesus is in the centre and His disciples are distributing to the hungry multitude the miraculous bread which

is constantly renewed, — symbol of the Eucharistic bread, which feeds generations and multitudes upon earth. The paintings on the two side walls represent "The return of the Prodigal Son," and "The Labourer of the Eleventh Hour," whom the stewards are driving away, but who is welcomed by the master. The one is by Sazanof, the other by Nikitine. Cherubim upraising a ciborium are painted on the vaulting.

The centre nave from the transept to the gate, has been decorated by Bruni. In the pediment at the end, Jehovah, enthroned on a cloud and surrounded by a host of archangels, angels, and cherubim, forming a circle symbolic of eternity, — seems to be satisfied with creation and to bless it. At a nod of His brows the Infinite has trembled within its deepest recesses, and nothingness has become everything.

On the attic is the terrestrial Paradise, with its trees, flowers, and animals. The first two human beings live in peace among the creatures which sin, and death the consequence of sin, will make hostile later on. As yet the lion does not tear the gazelle, the tiger does not spring at the horse, and the elephant is unaware of the power of its tusks. All respect the image of God imprinted on the faces of the dwellers in

Eden. In the vaulting, angels contemplate with amazement the sun and the moon, the luminaries of heaven, which have just been lighted.

The panel in the attic has for its subject "The Deluge;" the waters pouring in cataracts from the abyss and the sky have covered the young world so soon corrupted, which has already made God regret that He has given it life. A few peaks, which the flood will soon overtop, alone emerge from the shoreless ocean; the last remnants of mankind, condemned to perish, cling desperately to them with stiff and contracted muscles, and seek to climb upon the narrow plateau. In the distance, under the rain that falls in torrents, floats the Ark, bearing within its hollow sides the sole survivors of the ancient creation. On the other panel, the companion painting to "The Deluge" is "Noah's Sacrifice." From a primitive altar in the form of a block of rock, ascends into the serene air the bluish smoke of the sacrifice that God has accepted; the patriarch, with the high stature of an antediluvian man, towers over his sons and his daughters-in-law, prostrated around him; each pair of them will be the ancestors of a great human family. In the background, against a curtain of clouds that are passing away, the

rainbow curves its varicoloured arch, — the sign of the covenant, which promises, when it appears after a storm, that henceforth the waters shall not again cover the earth, henceforth safe from any cosmic catastrophe until the day of Judgment.

Somewhat farther on, the "Vision of Ezekiel" covers a great portion of the vaulting. Standing upon a rock, under a sky ablaze with crimson reflections, in the centre the valley of Jehoshaphat, the dead population of which is germinating and quivering like corn in the furrow, — the prophet beholds the terrifying spectacle outspread about him; at the irresistible call of the angels blowing trumpets, the dead arise in their shrouds, the skeletons drag themselves on fleshless limbs, and re-adjust their scattered bones; the bodies raise from out of the sepulchres their decomposed faces, to which life returns with terror and remorse. These larvæ that were once the nations of the earth, seem to beg for mercy and to regret the night of the tomb, save a few just ones full of hope in the Divine goodness, and unterrified by the dread gesture of the prophet. This painting, which is of considerable dimensions, exhibits great power of imagination and masterly vigour of style; it is plain that the artist studied the frescoes in

the Sistine chapel; the colouring is sober, strong, of historical tone, — that noble vestment of thought which modern painters too often abandon for sensational lighting and the minute, accurate details so utterly out of place in monumental and decorative painting.

At the end of the same nave, on the vaulting of the Ikonostas, Bruni has painted "The Last Judgment," foretold in the vision of Ezekiel. A colossal Christ, twice and even thrice as tall as the figures that surround Him, stands before His throne on cloud steps. I am very much in favour of this Byzantine fashion of making the Divine and chief personage dominate in a visible manner; it strikes at once both the cultivated and the uncultivated imaginations, the latter by the material aspect, the former by the ideal. The ages are past, Time is no more, Eternity, Recompense, and Chastisement alone subsist; overthrown by the breath of angels the old skeleton falls to powder, its scythe broken. Death itself dies in its turn.

On the right of Christ crowd, with an upward movement, swarms of souls of the blessed, with slender, pure forms, long, chaste draperies, faces radiant with beauty, love, and ecstasy, fraternally welcomed by the angels. On His left fall in a tremendous rush,

repelled by stern, severe angels, with pointed wings and flaming swords, the groups of the damned, in which are seen under their hideous forms all the evil tendencies that drag man down, — Envy with its long hair falling on its lean temples like knots of serpents; Avarice, sordid, angular, and contracted; Impiety, casting at heaven a glance of powerless menace. All the guilty, borne down by their sins, are plunged into the abyss where the contracted hands of demons, the bodies of which are not seen, await them, to tear them in eternal torture. These knotty hands, provided with claws that look like the iron combs used by torturers, are intensely poetic and terrifying; they are an invention worthy of Michael Angelo or Dante. The hands I saw in the cartoon, but looked for in vain in the painting, — the projecting cornice and curve of the dark vaulting in this corner no doubt preventing their being seen.

At the two ends of the transept, of which Bruni's "Last Judgment" occupies the centre, are paintings arranged as follows, but which a scanty light prevents being appreciated properly: in the top, at the back, is the "Resurrection of Lazarus," the brother of Martha and Mary, by Shebonief; above, in the pediment,

"Mary at the feet of Christ," by the same artist; on the side wall "Jesus casting out a devil," "The wedding at Cana," and "Christ saving St. Peter on the waters;" — all by Shebonief, as also, on the other side, is the great painting in the attic representing "Jesus restoring to life the Son of the Widow of Nain," and that in the pediment, "Jesus calling little children to Him." The side wall contains various miracles of Christ, by Alexeïef, — "The Healing of the Paralytic," "The Repentant Woman," "The Healing of the Blind."

Another transept — for the church, divided into three naves along its length, is divided by five others in its breadth — contains paintings by different artists: "Joseph receiving his Brethren in Egypt," by Markof, is a vast composition which fills up the whole of the attic; "Jacob on his death-bed blessing his Sons," is represented in the pediment; this painting is the work of Steuben. On the three panels of these walls, according to the division I have adopted, follow Pluchart's "Aaron's Sacrifice," "Joshua reaching the Promised Land," and "Gideon finding the Fleece." On the attic opposite the painting of "Joseph receiving his Brethren," is Alexeïef's "Crossing of the Red Sea," — a tumultuous, disorderly composition, the action in

which is somewhat too violent for mural painting; it is difficult to make out the subject, owing to the multiplicity of figures, especially as the background is unfavourable. Above, "The Destroying Angel slaying the First-born of Egypt;" the latter painting is also by Alexeïef. Pluchart's "Moses saved from the Nile," "The Burning Bush," and "Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh," adorn one of the walls; the other is ornamented by paintings representing "Miriam singing the praises of God," "Jehovah giving the Tables of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai," and "Moses dictating his Last Will," by Zavialof.

At each end of the lateral naves on the right and left of the door, rises a cupola. In the first, Riss has painted in the vaulting the "Apotheosis of St. Fevronia," surrounded by angels bearing palms and instruments of torture such as torches, faggots, and swords. In the pendentives, on a golden background in imitation of mosaics, the prophets Hosea, Joel, Haggai, and Zechariah. Within the arches historical and devotional subjects, among others "Minine and Pozarsky," names which make every patriotic Russian heart beat high. I may be allowed to devote a few lines to this painting, since it is not sufficient, especially for readers who are

not Russians, to merely mention the titles, as one may do with a scene drawn from Holy Scripture, which every Christian knows, whatever the communion to which he belongs.

Kiniaz Pozarsky and Minine the moujik have resolved to save their country, which the Poles threaten to invade; they are preparing to start, and are advancing at the head of their troops, the nobility and the people clasping hands in the person of these two heroes, who, desiring to place their enterprise under the protection of God, have caused to be borne before them by the clergy the holy image of our Lady of Kazan, upon which, as a sign of approval, falls a beam from on high. Men, women, children, old men, people of every age and every condition, prostrate themselves in the snow as the procession goes by. At the back are seen palisades and the crenelated walls and towers of the Kremlin.

The other pediment shows Dimitri-Donskoï kneeling on the threshold of the monastery and receiving the blessing of St. Sergius Rodonej, accompanied by his monks, before he goes to defeat the Tartars under Mamaï, near Koulikovo.

The subject of the third painting is Ivan III, show-

ing to St. Peter, the Metropolitan, the plans of the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow; the holy man appears to approve of them and to call down the blessing of Heaven upon the pious founder. The fourth vault is filled with a council of apostles, upon whom the Holy Ghost is descending.

In the companion cupola are seen the following paintings, all by Riss: on the ceiling the "Apotheosis of St. Isaac of Dalmatia;" on the pendentives, Jonas, Nahum, Habbakuk, and Sophronia; the arches contain subjects relating to the introduction of Christianity into Russia: "Vladimir asked to embrace the Christian faith," "The Baptism of Vladimir," "The Baptism of the Inhabitants of Kief," "The Publication of the adoption of Christianity by Vladimir." These cupolas are ornamented with an Ionic order. The paintings themselves, cleverly composed, are executed somewhat too much like historical paintings; the artist, seeking for effects, has not remembered sufficiently the conditions of mural painting; scenes which are framed within arches or architectural divisions should be toned down rather than dramatised, and approach polychrome *bassi-relievi*. A painter working in a church or a palace should above all be a decorator, and sacrifice

his own self-love to the general effect of the monument; his work must be connected with it so as to be undetachable. The great Italian masters, in their frescoes, so different from their paintings, have understood better than the masters of other nations this particular aspect of art. This reproach is not addressed to Riss in particular; it applies in varying degrees to most of the artists charged with the decoration of St. Isaac's, who have not always made the sacrifices of execution called for by mural painting.

The blocks of masonry against which the pillars and pilasters are placed, are, like the walls, decorated with subjects by different artists; these paintings are placed in niches, with brackets and cartouches containing inscriptions. In these niches de Neff has painted "The Ascension," "Jesus Christ sending His Portrait to Abgarus," "The Elevation of the Cross," "The Birth of the Virgin," "The Presentation in the Temple," "The Intercession of the Virgin," "The Descent of the Holy Ghost." These paintings are full of feeling and colour, and may be counted among the most satisfactory in the church. Steuben has painted "St. Joachim and St. Anne," "The Birth of St. John the Baptist," "The Entry into Jerusalem," "The

Crucifixion," "The Entombment," "The Resurrection," and "The Assumption of the Virgin." Mussini's work consists of: "The Annunciation," "The Birth of Jesus," "The Circumcision," "The Purification of the Virgin," "The Baptism of Christ," and "The Transfiguration."

All the paintings in St. Isaac's are in oils. Fresco painting does not suit damp climates, and its boasted permanence does not resist the wear of two or three centuries, as is unfortunately proved by the more or less extensive state of deterioration of the greater number of masterpieces, the authors of which hoped would remain ever fresh and bright. Encaustic painting might have been resorted to, of course, but it is difficult to execute; painters are not well acquainted with it, and but rarely turn it to account. In addition, the wax is apt to shine in the parts which have been well worked over; and the experiments made with it are all too recent to base judgments upon as regards the durable qualities of the process. De Montferrand was therefore wise in preferring oils for the paintings in St. Isaac's.

Now let us come to the Ikonostas, that wall covered with holy images set in gold which conceals the secrets

of the sanctuary. Those of my readers who have seen the gigantic retables in Spanish churches will have some idea of the development which Greek worship gives to this part of the church.

The architect has raised his Ikonostas up to the attic, so that it is connected with the order of the edifice and is not out of harmony with the colossal proportions of the monument of which it fills up the whole end from one wall to the other. It is a temple façade within a temple. The lower portion is formed of three steps of red porphyry. The division line between the priests and the congregation is marked by a balustrade of white marble, with gilded pilasters, encrusted and inlaid with precious marbles. The wall of the Ikonostas is built of the finest Italian marbles, making a background which would be rich anywhere else, but which here disappears almost completely under the most gorgeous ornamentation.

Eight fluted malachite columns of the Corinthian order, with gilded bronze bases and capitals, and two engaged pilasters, form the façade and support the attic. The colour of the malachite, its metallic brilliancy, its green coppery tints, strangely attractive to the eye, its perfect hard stone polish, surprise by their beauty

and magnificence. At first it is impossible to believe in the reality of such luxury, for malachite is used only for tables, vases, coffers, bracelets, and jewelry, while these pillars, as well as the pilasters that accompany them, are forty-two feet high. The plates of malachite cut out of the block by circular saws, invented on purpose, are joined so accurately that they look like monoliths resting upon bronze bases, supported upon iron cylinders cast in one piece, on which rests the lower portion of the attic.

There are three doors in the Ikonostas. The centre one leads into the sanctuary; the two others into the chapels of St. Catherine and St. Alexander Nevsky. The order is thus distributed: a pilaster in the corner, a pillar, then the chapel door, next three pillars, the main entrance, three other pillars, the chapel door, a pillar, and a pilaster. The wall is divided by these pillars and pilasters into spaces which form frames, and which are filled with paintings on gold backgrounds, in imitation of mosaics. They are the models for the real mosaics themselves, which are gradually replacing the paintings. From the substructure to the cornice there are two superimposed rows of frames, separated by a secondary cornice broken by the pillars, and which

rests, over the centre gate, upon two small pillars of lapis-lazuli, and over the chapel doors upon pilasters of white statuary marble. Above runs an attic cut by pilasters overlaid with porphyry, jasper, agate, malachite, and other native precious materials; it is decorated with gilded bronze ornaments, the richness and splendour of which are not surpassed by any retable in Italy or Spain. The pilasters placed over the pillars form compartments, which are also filled with paintings on a gold background.

A fourth story, in the shape of a pediment, rises above the line of the attic and ends in a great gilded group of angels in adoration at the foot of the Cross, on either side of which an angel kneels in prayer; it is by Vitali. In the centre a painting by Givago represents "Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives," accepting the cup of bitterness during that funereal watch when His dearest apostles fell asleep. Immediately below it, two great angels in high relief, holding sacred vases, their silvery wings fluttering, their tunics flowing in many swelling folds, accompanied by little angels in less high relief, which sink into the wall, are placed by the side of a larger panel representing "The Last Supper," half in painting and half in bas-relief. The

figures are painted; while the background, gilded all over, represents, with skilfully arranged flat surfaces, the room in which took place the Paschal love-feast. This painting is also by Givago.

Under the arch of the door, adorned with a semi-circular inscription in Slavic characters, rises a group thus arranged: in the centre, Christ, the eternal high-priest according to the order of Melchisedec, is seated upon a richly adorned throne; in one hand He holds the orb of the world, represented by a globe of lapis-lazuli, and with the other makes the gesture of consecration; around His head is an aureole; His garments are of gold; the angels crowd behind, and at His feet are lying the winged lion and the symbolical ox. On the right follows the Blessed Virgin, on the left St. John the Precursor; this group, which breaks through the cornice, presents a remarkable peculiarity: the figures are in high relief, with the exception of the heads and hands, that are painted upon a plate of silver or other metal, cut out in contour; this mingling of Byzantine ikon-work with sculpture produces an extraordinarily powerful effect, and it is after a careful examination only that one observes that the faces and the bare parts of the body are seen to be not in relief. The gilded reliefs were

modelled by Klodt, the flats were painted by de Neff. By an insensible gradation, patriarchs, apostles, kings, saints, martyrs, just men, the pious multitude which forms the court and the army of Christ, and the groups which fill the spaces of the archivolt, are connected with the central subject. These latter figures are merely painted upon the gilded background.

The arches of the side doors bear on top, by way of ornament, the Tables of the Law, and a chalice of marble and gold, surrounded by rays, and accompanied by little painted angels.

When the sacred door which is in the centre of that vast façade of gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, malachite, jasper, porphyry, agate, — a wonderful jewel-casket, containing all the riches which human magnificence, unhampered by the thought of expense, can collect, — when, I say, that sacred door mysteriously closes its leaves of silver-gilt, chiselled, wrought out, carved, which are no less than thirty-five feet high by fourteen feet wide, one perceives through a blaze of light in ribbon frames, the most marvellous that ever surrounded the work of the brush, paintings representing the busts of the four Evangelists, with the angel Gabriel and the Blessed Virgin full length. When, in the course of worship,

the sacred gate throws open its broad leaves, a colossal Christ, forming the painting in the window at the end of the sanctuary, appears amid gold and purple, His right hand raised in blessing, in an attitude in which modern science is happily united with the majesty of Byzantine tradition. Most beautiful, most splendid, is this image of the Saviour, illumined by dazzling rays, as if it stood in the Heaven perceived through the arch of the Ikonostas. The mysterious obscurity which fills the church at certain times, increases still more the brilliancy and transparency of this magnificent stained-glass window, which was executed in Munich.

These are the main divisions. Now let me describe the figures they contain, beginning with the first row on the visitor's right, as he looks at the Ikonostas.

First comes Jesus Christ, on a throne of Byzantine architecture, the orb in one hand, the other raised in blessing; next, St. Isaac of Dalmatia, unrolling the plan of the cathedral. These two figures are in mosaic on backgrounds formed of small crystal cubes, backed with ducat gold, producing the warm, rich effect admired in St. Sophia's at Constantinople, and St. Mark's at Venice. St. Michael, bishop of Myra, and patron saint of Russia, wearing a brocaded dalmatic, his hand raised and hold-

ing a book, fills the third panel. The line is completed by St. Peter, who is separated from St. Nicholas by the door of the side chapel. All these figures are the work of de Neff. On the second row, beginning with the group of Jesus Christ in glory, surrounded by the elect, the first figure is that of St. Michael overcoming the dragon; in the same panel are St. Anne and St. Elizabeth, whose maternity was miraculous. The last compartment contains Constantine the Great, and the Empress Helena clad in purple and gold. This series is by Theodore Brulof. Following the same order are seen on the attic, separated by marble pillars overlaid with hard stone, the prophet Isaiah, whose extended hand seems to pierce the darkness of the future, Jeremiah, with a robe on which are inscribed his lamentations, David leaning on his harp, Noah accompanied by the rainbow, and finally Adam, the father of mankind, painted by Givago. On the left of the sacred door, balancing symmetrically the Christ placed on the other side, the Blessed Virgin is first seen, with the Child Jesus in her lap; this painting is already in mosaic, as well as the next panel, which represents St. Alexander Nevsky in his armour, with a buckler and the standard of the faith, on which is borne the image of Christ.

Near St. Alexander Nevsky is St. Catherine, a crown on her brow, a palm in her hand, and by her side the wheel which was the instrument of her martyrdom. In the corner beyond the chapel arch, St. Paul leans on his sword. The whole of this series is by de Neff. The second series contains St. Nicholas in his stuff robe; St. Magdalen and the Czarina Alexandra in the same panel, the one marked by a vase of perfume, the other by the crown, the sword, and the palm; St. Vladimir and St. Olga, recognisable by their imperial costumes; these are by Brulof. In the third series come, in the following order, Daniel with the lion, Elijah the prophet, King Solomon carrying a model of the Temple, Melchisedec, king of Salem, presenting the bread of sacrifice, and finally the patriarch Abraham,—all by Givago. This rampart of figures, separated by malachite pillars, compartments of precious marbles, and richly ornamented cornices, produces a magnificent and imposing effect in the mysterious penumbra which fills this part of the cathedral; occasionally a sunbeam streams upon the backgrounds of ruddy gold; a plate lights up, making the figure of a saint stand out as if it were living; the ray of light flows along the fluting of the malachite, a spark rests upon the gilded capital, a wreath is illumined

and straightway projects, the painted heads in the gilded group acquire a singular life, and resemble those miraculous images in legends, which look, speak, and walk. The twinkling tapers cast unexpected luminosity upon some detail hitherto concealed, and now suddenly seen in its full value. According to the time of day the veil of the sanctuary is darkened by warm shadows or illumined by a splendid blaze.

On the left of the Ikonostas as one faces it, is the chapel placed under the invocation of St. Catherine; it is reached through the Arcade, surmounted by angels holding the pyx, which leads into the great Ikonostas itself, alongside of the sacred door. The Ikonostas of the chapel of St. Catherine, which can be seen from the very end of the church, framed within the lateral nave, is thus arranged: a façade of white statuary marble, inlaid with malachite and adorned with gilded bronze ornaments, bears on the summit of the pediment a gilded sculptural group by Pimenef, representing Jesus Christ rising from the tomb, to the great terror of the guards; in the pediment cherubim display on a cloth the portrait of the Saviour, that miraculous imprint which was not painted by human hands; the Entombment is on a frieze within the archivolt; above the door is the Last Sup-

per; the leaves of the door itself are ornamented with four heads of Evangelists, the angel Gabriel, and the Virgin Mary. In the first panel on the right is Christ holding the open Gospels; in the panel above is St. Catherine with her usual attributes, the crown, the palm, and the wheel; on the left panel the Holy Virgin of Vladimir forms a companion to the Christ; above is the martyrdom of St. Anastasia, bound to the pile; over the right door, which is cut in cant, is the Emperor Constantine, wearing a crown and a robe of gilded brocade covered with eagles; in the upper compartment St. Metrophanius of Voronej, with his crozier; on the other door the Empress Helena, holding a cross, in remembrance of the fact that she discovered the remains of the True Cross; above, St. Sergius Rodonej.

Within the Ikonostas are painted "Jesus Christ blessing the image of the Saviour on linen," by Pluchart, and a "Madonna" by Chamechine. Opposite the window rises the side wall of the great Ikonostas, adorned with sculptures and paintings. The brackets which support the attic are themselves supported by Ionic pilasters of white statuary marble; above the door angels worship a radiant chalice, raised on a base adorned

with three cherubs' heads. On the door itself the archangel Nicholas, freely copied by Theodore Brulof from the St. Michael in the Louvre, is overcoming the dragon. On either side are St. Alexis of Moscow and St. Peter the Metropolitan, both wearing rich sacerdotal vestments. The second row, formed of panels framed in rich mouldings, contains St. Boris, and St. Gleba, St. Barnabas, St. John and St. Timothy, St. Theodosius and St. Anthony. All these figures are painted on gold backgrounds, with a slight archaic feeling.

The ceiling of the dome represents "the Assumption of the Virgin;" the pendentives contain St. John Damascus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Clement, and St. Ignatius. In the recesses of the arches, Bassine, the painter of the mural work in this chapel, has represented the martyrdom of St. Catherine, that of St. Dimitri, that of St. George, and St. Barbara renouncing the world.

On the other side of the great Ikonostas, forming a companion to the chapel of St. Catherine, is the chapel of St. Alexander Nevsky, the Ikonostas in which is arranged in exactly the same way: the pediment is crowned with a gilded group of Jesus

on Mount Tabor, by Pimenef; below, cherubim display a drapery on which is inscribed an inscription in Slavic letters; on the frieze is painted "Christ bearing His cross;" in the archivolt, "The Last Supper;" on the pediment the four Evangelists, and "The Annunciation," with the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary; on the right of the door, "Christ calling little children;" the upper compartment contains St. Alexander Nevsky in his armour; on the back wall, on the same line, is the Czarevich, a young child supported by angels that bear him to heaven; below is St. Vladimir, wearing a crown and a brocade dress, and carrying a Greek cross; on the left the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus; above, St. Spiridion; on the cant wall St. Michael of Tver, in armour, and St. Olga in imperial costume, pressing a small cross to her breast. The figures on this Ikonostas are the work of Maïkof. Within the Ikonostas there is a "Christ blessing," by Pluchart, and "The Nativity," by Chamchine. The ceiling of the cupola represents Jehovah in glory, surrounded by a circle of angels and cherubim; in the pendentives are painted St. Nicodemus, St. Joseph, the husband of the Virgin, St. James the Less, called the brother of Christ, and Joseph of

Arimathea. The pediments of the arches are filled with scenes from the life of St. Alexander Nevsky, to whom the chapel is dedicated: in one he is praying for the fatherland; in another he is winning a battle over the Swedes, his white horse rearing in the centre of the mêlée; in a third, stretched out on his deathbed, he is dying like a Christian, between the burning candles and the priests repeating prayers; in the fourth his remains are being borne to their last resting-place, on a catafalque placed on a boat. These paintings, as well as the mural paintings in the chapel of St. Catherine, are by Pietro Bassine.

The wall of the principal Ikonostas, which closes the chapel of St. Alexander Nevsky on this side, is arranged and ornamented in exactly the same way, save that above the door the chalice is replaced by the Tables of the Law.

On the door itself Theodore Brulof has painted the angel Gabriel, and in the impost, Moses between the prophets Samuel and Elisha. The two neighbouring panels contain St. Polycarpus and St. Taraisius, St. Methodius, and St. Cyril, the apostle of the Slavs; the panels on either side of the door, St. Philip, and St. Jonas, Metropolitan of Moscow. All these figures,

on gilded backgrounds and in modernised Byzantine style, are by Dorner.

I have now to describe the Holy of Holies, hidden from the eyes of the faithful by the screen of gold, malachite, lapis-lazuli, and agate of the Ikonostas. Rarely does one penetrate within the mysterious and sacred place in which the secret rites of the Greek worship are celebrated. It is a sort of hall or choir, lighted by a stained-glass window, in which blazes a giant Christ, which is seen from the other end of the Church when the sanctuary gates are open. Two of the walls are formed by the interior faces of the decorated walls which I have just described; on the south, at the back of the door, St. Lawrence holds the gridiron, the instrument of his martyrdom, St. Basil the great, St. Gregory Nazianzen, are represented in the side compartments. The attic, divided into three frames, has in the first St. Gregory Dialagos, and St. Ephrem of Syria; in the second, above the door, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Samson, and St. Eusebius; in the third, St. Cosmo and St. Damian. Dorner, the Bavarian artist, painted the figures on the upper row, Moldavsky those on the lower.

The northern wall accurately reproduces this arrangement: St. Stephen is painted above the door; on either side are St. John Chrysostom and St. Athanasius of Alexandria, by Moldavsky. Dorner painted the upper row, which contains Alexis, the man in God, St. John Climax, St. Tycho of Amathontis, St. Pantaleimon, St. Methodius, St. Anthony, and St. Theodore of Kiev.

Behind the Ikonostas is seen the image of Christ, imprinted on the cloth held out by St. Veronica; it is by de Neff. Above the organ case, "Christ blessing the holy Offerings," by Chamchine. On the ceiling Bruni has painted a Holy Ghost, with angels; and on the three sides of the attic, "The Washing of Feet," "Jesus Christ giving the Keys to St. Peter," "Jesus manifesting Himself to the Apostles," — compositions in excellent style and filled with the truest religious feeling.

The altar, of white statuary marble, is of the noblest simplicity. The tabernacle is formed of a model of the church of St. Isaac's, of silver-gilt, and of great weight; the model has a number of details which are not found in the actual building, for instance: the buttresses supporting the campaniles are adorned with

great groups in relief, like those on the Arc de l'Étoile; and the attic, which is plain in the actual building, shows in the model a series of *bassi-relievi*, the effect of which would have been pleasing, it seems to me.

I have not mentioned here and there within the church, a number of medallions or compartments set in the vaultings and soffits; they are badly lighted, difficult to see, and have no other than a decorative value. They represent angels bearing sacred attributes, by Chamchine; Elijah, Enoch, Faith, Hope, Charity, Wisdom, Love, by Maïkof. I merely mention them in order that my work may be complete.

Now that I have described, with all the care of which I am capable, the exterior and interior of St. Isaac's, let me sketch with a freer and bolder brush some of the effects of light and shade in the vast interior. There is a certain lack of light in St. Isaac's, or at least the light is unequally distributed. The cupola casts a flood of light upon the centre of the cathedral, and the four great windows sufficiently illumine the cupolas situated in the four corners of the edifice; but other portions remain obscure, or at least are lighted only at certain hours of the day, and by passing incidental beams.

This defect was intentional, for nothing was easier than to cut windows in the building, which is clear on all sides. The architect preferred this mysterious twilight, favourable to religious impressions and to prayer; but he seems to have forgotten that this penumbra, which accords very well with Romanesque, Byzantine, or Gothic architecture, is less appropriate in a building in the classical style, which is meant to be well lighted, and which is covered with precious marbles, gilded ornaments, mural paintings, that ought to be visible and that one wishes to see after performing one's devotions. A number of the paintings were executed in great part by lamplight, a fact which in itself condemns the position they are placed in. It would have been easy, in my opinion, to conciliate everything, and to have in turn the necessary bright light or shadow by means of windows, which could have been closed with shutters, hangings, or opaque blinds; religion would have been no loser, while art would have been the gainer. If there are long summer days in St. Petersburg, there are also long winter nights which encroach upon the day time, and during which there falls from heaven but a scanty light.

I am bound to say, however, that striking effects result

from these alternations of shadow and brightness. When one beholds at the end of the obscure naves the chapels of St. Alexander Nevsky and St. Catherine, the white marble Ikonostases of which, adorned with gilded bronze, inlaid with malachite and agate, overlaid with paintings upon golden backgrounds, are illumined by a great lateral window, the brilliancy of these façades, framed in by the dark vaulting, which helps to set them off is positively dazzling. The great stained-glass Christ window glows in the penumbra with marvellous intensity of colour. The softened light does not injure the isolated figures, the sharp contours of which stand out against the golden background. The brilliancy of the metal always brings a figure out sufficiently, but in a composition with multiple groups and natural backgrounds, the case is not always the same. Many interesting details escape, even when glasses are used. Byzantine churches, or rather, to speak more accurately, churches in the Greco-Russian style, in which reigns that religious mysteriousness which de Montferrand sought to obtain in St. Isaac's, do not contain paintings properly so called; the walls are covered with decorative paintings, and figures drawn without any striving after effect or illusion, upon a flat gold or coloured back-

ground, in conventional attitudes, with unchanging attributes, expressed by simple lines and flat tints, clothing the edifice as with a rich tapestry, the general tone of which satisfies the eye. I am aware that the architect urged the artists charged with the paintings for St. Isaac's, to make use of broad masses, bold strokes, and a decorative manner, — a piece of advice much easier to give than to follow, in view of the style of architecture that has been adopted. Each artist has done his best according to his temperament, but his talent unconsciously yielded to the modern character of the church, except on the various Ikonostases, on which the figures, isolated or placed side by side in golden panels, stand out strongly and assume those sharp contours which painting needs when it is intended to ornament a building.

Bruni's compositions, the subject of which I have mentioned as they occurred in the description of the church, are noteworthy for the deep feeling of style and their really historical manner, due to profound and thoughtful study of Italian masters. I insist upon this quality, for it is disappearing with us as elsewhere. Ingres and his school are the last representatives of it. A certain piquancy of anecdote, a too curious striving

after effects and details, the fear lest too much austerity should compromise success, prevent modern works from having that stamp of masterly gravity which in past ages even second-rate paintings possessed. Bruni maintains the great traditions; he has drawn his inspiration from the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican; and besides his own personal feelings, he mingles with that inspiration something of the deep and thoughtful manner peculiar to the German school. It is plain that if he has long studied Michael Angelo and Raphael, he has also looked intelligently at Overbeck, Cornelius, and Kaulbach, too little known in Paris, and whose works have told more than is generally supposed on the schools of contemporary art. He meditates, arranges, balances, and thinks out his compositions, without suffering from the desire to get quickly at the painting itself, which makes itself felt nowadays in many paintings otherwise very meritorious. With Bruni execution is but the means of expressing a thought, it is not the end and aim. He knows that when the subject has been drawn on the cartoon in good style, with nobility and grandeur, the most important part of the art work is done. It may even be said that he neglects colour somewhat, and uses in too large

proportion sober, neutral, dull, abstract tints, so to speak, due to the fact that he desires to let the idea alone stand out strongly. I do not like in historical painting what is called illusion ; reality, when too crude, life, when too material, disturb those serene compositions, in which the images of the objects and not the objects themselves are reproduced. Nevertheless, it is wise to avoid somewhat, especially in view of the future, the dull and dark masses suggested by a study of old frescoes. The paintings which Bruni has executed in St. Isaac's are the most monumental in the church ; they have more character and maestria. Although he is sufficiently acquainted with anatomy to indulge in the muscular violence called for by certain subjects, Bruni possesses in addition, as a special gift, unction, grace, and angelic suavity : approaching Overbeck's manner, his angels, cherubs, and blessed have an extremely charming elegance, high-bred air, and poetic look.

De Neff understood the work intrusted to him more as an artist working for a museum than as a decorator of the building ; but one cannot blame him for it. His paintings, which are placed much too close to the eye, about breast-high, so to speak, in the niches and pilasters which form frames and give to mural

painting the aspect of an easel painting, — did not require the sacrifice of effect and perspective called for by attics, vaulting and cupolas. De Neff has a warm, brilliant colour, a clever and accurate execution, which recalls Peter de Hess, whose paintings I saw in Munich. "Jesus sending His portrait to Abgarus," and "The Empress Helena finding the True Cross," are remarkable works, which might be taken from their places without their value being diminished. All the other paintings by de Neff, in the niches and pilasters, bear the stamp of the master, and reveal a well-endowed artist, who has a very accurate feeling of colour and chiaroscuro. The single figures he has placed upon the Ikonostas, the heads and portions of bare flesh, painted by him in the great gilded group which surmounts the sacred door, have amazing vigour of tone and relief; it was difficult to combine more skilfully painting and high relief, the work of the brush and that of the chisel. Bruni's paintings for composition and style, and de Neff's for colour and execution, strike me as the most satisfactory in their kind.

Pietro Bassine, whose numerous works prove his abundance, his facility, and his practice in decorative work, which distinguished the painters of the eighteenth

century, — who nowadays have regained the rank denied them by David and his school, — Bassine easily covers great spaces, and understands what in art is called the machine; his compositions are pictures, a much rarer talent than people think, and which is gradually disappearing.

The sober, pure, and correct talent of Mussini is well known in Paris. He has painted in the niches and the pilasters several compositions which conform to the reputation he has acquired. Markoff, Zavialoff, Pluchart, Sazonoff, Theodore Brulof, Nikitine, Shebonieff, also deserve praise for the manner in which they have acquitted themselves of their task.

If I have not pronounced a final judgment on the cupola of Charles Brulof, it is because sickness and death, as I mentioned when describing his composition, carried out by Bassine, prevented his painting it himself and giving it the stamp of his own individuality, one of the most powerful and most remarkable produced by Russian national art. There was in Brulof the stuff of a great painter, and, with many defects, genius, which makes up for everything. His head, which he took pleasure in reproducing several times with the increasing pallor and thinness of disease, sparkles with

genius; under the wild fair hair and the brow ever paler, illumined by eyes in which life is concentrated, there was a certainly artistic and poetic thought.

Now let me sum up in a few lines this long study of the Cathedral of St. Isaac of Dalmatia. Unquestionably, whether the style is or is not approved, it is the greatest religious building erected within this century. It does honour to de Montferrand, who completed it in so short a space of time; he could go down to the grave saying to himself with more truth than many a proud poet: *Exegi monumentum aere perennius*, a satisfaction rarely granted to architects, whose plans are sometimes so long in being carried out, and who behold the inauguration of the temples they have begun only from the spirit world.

Rapid as was the building of St. Isaac's, nevertheless the time which passed between the laying of the foundation stone and that of the last stone, was long enough for many a change to take place. At the time when the plans of the cathedral were received the classical taste ruled undivided and uncontradicted; no other style was considered a type of perfection save the Greek or Roman. Whatever the genius of man had imagined to carry out the idea of a new religion was

considered as of no account; Romanesque, Byzantine, and Gothic architecture were in bad taste, contrary to rule, barbaric, in a word. They had an historical value, but unquestionably no one would have thought of taking any of them for a model. The Renaissance was barely tolerated on account of its love of antiquity, to which it added many delightful inventions and charming fancies blamed by severe critics. Then came the Romanticist school, which by its enthusiastic study of the Middle Ages and the national origins of art, made man understand by glowing commentaries the beauties of the basilicas, the cathedrals, and the chapels so long disdained as the patient work of unintelligent ages of faith. Then was discovered a very complete, thoroughly thought-out art, perfectly conscious of itself, obeying set rules, possessing a complicated and mysterious symbolism in buildings as amazing by their size as by the finish of their details, and which until then had been believed the chance work of ignorant stone-cutters and masons. A reaction took place, which soon became unjust, as does every reaction. The modern edifices erected in classical style were considered as absolutely devoid of merit, and it may be that more than one Russian regrets that in the construction of

this sumptuous temple it was not St. Sophia's at Constantinople that was imitated, rather than the Pantheon at Rome. This opinion could be easily formed and maintained; perhaps to-day it might triumph; I myself should not think it at all unreasonable, were the building of St. Isaac's to be begun now. But at the time the plans were drawn no architect would have done differently from de Montferrand; any attempt in any other direction would have appeared insensate.

As for myself, putting all systems aside, it appears to me that the classical style is best suited to St. Isaac's, the metropolis of the Greek church; the use of consecrated forms which are above fashion and time, which cannot become old-fashioned or barbaric, because they are eternal, however long the edifice remains standing,—were best in a monument of this kind, for they give to it a stamp of universality. Known to all civilised peoples, these forms can only excite admiration without surprise and without criticism; and though another style might have appeared more local, more picturesque, more novel, it would also have had the disadvantage of giving rise to contradictory judgments, and perhaps of appearing bizarre, an impression absolutely contrary to the effect it was desired to produce. The architect did

not seek singularity, he sought beauty; and undoubtedly St. Isaac's is the most beautiful of modern churches. Its architecture is admirably suited to St. Petersburg, the youngest and newest of capital cities.

It seems to me that those who regret that St. Isaac's is not in the Byzantine style are much like those who regret that St. Peter's at Rome is not in the Gothic style. These great temples, centres of a belief, ought to have nothing peculiar, temporary, or local about them; the faithful of all ages and of all countries must be able to kneel there amid riches, splendour, and beauty.

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

MOSCOW

THOUGH I found life in St. Petersburg very pleasant, I felt the liveliest desire to see the real Russian capital, the great Muscovite City, a desire which the existence of the railway rendered easy of fulfilment. I was sufficiently acclimated not to fear the journey, with the thermometer at ten below zero. An opportunity presented itself to proceed to Moscow in pleasant company; I clutched its forelock, white with frost, and put on my full winter costume, a pelisse lined with weasel fur, beaver fur cap, furred boots coming above the knee. My trunk was put into one sleigh, my carefully enveloped person into another, and presently the pair of us reached the vast station, waiting for the hour of departure, which was set for noon. Russian railways do not pique themselves as ours do, however, on being punctual; if an important personage is coming the locomotive represses its ardour for some minutes — a quarter of an hour even — to give the great man more time to arrive. Travellers

are escorted to the station by their parents and friends, and the parting, when the last bell is sounded, involves endless handshakes, embraces, and tender words often interrupted by tears. Occasionally even, the whole company takes tickets, gets into the carriage, and accompanies the departing friend to the next station, returning by the next train. I like this custom, which strikes me as touching. A painter might have observed there, on the faces of moujiks, not very handsome in other respects, expressions of pathetic simplicity; mothers and wives, whose son or husband was perhaps going away for a long time, recalled by their artless and deep grief the holy women with reddened eyes and lips contracted by stifled sobs whom the artists of the Middle Ages placed upon the Way of the Cross. I have seen in various countries, many post-yards, many wharves, but I have never seen anywhere such tender and desolate farewells as in Russia.

The installation of a railway train in a country where the thermometer falls more than once in the course of the winter as low as twenty below zero, is necessarily different from that which suffices in temperate climates. The tin hot-water bottles in use with us would soon freeze under the traveller's feet, and

these warming pans would turn into blocks of ice. The air filtering through the joints of the doors and windows would bring colds, pneumonia, and rheumatism in its train. The carriages are vestibuled, so that travellers can pass from one to another; they form a sort of apartment, with an antechamber, with toilet, where the hand luggage is placed. The antechamber opens on a platform surrounded by a balustrade, reached by steps, — far more convenient unquestionably than the steps of our own carriages.

Stoves chock-full of wood, heat the compartment, and keep the temperature up to between sixty-six and seventy degrees. The windows are padded with felt, which prevents any filtering in of cold air, and keep in the heat; so a trip from St. Petersburg to Moscow in the month of January, in a temperature the mere statement of which would make a Parisian shiver and his teeth chatter, — is not particularly Arctic: certainly one would suffer more in travelling at the same time of year between Burgos and Valladolid.

Around the first carriage ran a broad divan for the use of sleepers and people who do not fear to cross their legs in Oriental fashion. I preferred this divan to the well-upholstered, springy arm-chairs of the second

carriage, and installed myself comfortably in a corner. I seemed, when I had settled down, to be living in a house on wheels, instead of having to suffer the inconvenience of a carriage; I could rise, walk, pass from one room to another, with the same freedom as a passenger on a steamer, — a freedom which the poor wretch in a stage-coach, post-coach, or a railway-carriage such as are still used in France, lacks entirely.

To reserve my place, I marked it by putting down my hand-bag upon it. As the train was not ready to start I walked along the platform, and was quickly attracted by the curious funnel of the engine, shaped like the funnels used for filtering liquor, so that it resembles Venetian chimneys, the flaring tops of which stand out so picturesquely above the rosy walls in Canaletto's paintings.

Russian locomotives burn wood, and not coal as do ours and those of other Western countries; birch and pine logs are piled symmetrically on the tender, and are renewed at the wood-yards of the various stations, so that the peasants say that at the rate at which things are going on, it will soon become necessary in holy Russia to use the round logs of which the isbas (peasants' houses) are built, to feed the stoves; but before

the forests are cut down, — those, at least, which are not too far from the railways, — engineers will have discovered, by means of borings, veins of anthracite or soft coal; for the virgin soil must certainly conceal inexhaustible riches.

We start at last, leaving on our right, along the old land road, the Moscow triumphal arch, of grand and proud outline, and the last houses of the city, more and more wide-spread, are flying by with their wooden fences and wooden walls painted in the old Russian fashion, their green roofs silvered with snow; for the farther one goes from the centre, the buildings, which in the finer quarters follow the style of those in Berlin, London, or Paris, resume the national character. St. Petersburg begins to disappear, but the golden dome of St. Isaac's, the spire of the Admiralty, the pyramidions of the Guards' Church, the domes of starry azure, and the bulbous tin roofs, still sparkle on the horizon, resembling a Byzantine crown placed upon a cushion of silver brocade. The houses of men seem to sink into the ground, the houses of God to spring heavenward.

While I gazed the glass of the window was being covered, as a consequence of the difference between the cold exterior air and the warm interior atmosphere,

with delicate ramifications of the colour of quicksilver, which soon crossing their branches spread in broad leaves, forming a magic forest and so dimming the pane that the view of the landscape was totally intercepted. Certainly nothing can be prettier than these branches, arabesques, and filigree-work of ice, so delicately traced by the finger of Winter. It is a part of the poetry of the North, and imagination can easily discover in it an hyperborean mirage; yet after looking at them for an hour or so one becomes impatient of the white embroidered veil, that prevents both your being seen and seeing. Curiosity is annoyed at feeling that behind the ground glass there is passing a whole world of unknown aspects, which perhaps will never again meet the gaze. In France I should unhesitatingly have lowered the window. In Russia it might have proved a fatal imprudence: the cold, which is always watching its prey, would have pushed into the carriage its mysterious Polar paw, and have smitten me in the face. In the open air one can contend with it, as with a fierce but none the less loyal and generous though rough enemy; but one must not allow it to penetrate within. Neither the door nor the window must be half open, for then it wages a deadly battle against

heat; it pierces it with its icy darts, and if one of these were to strike you in the side, you would find it difficult to recover from the wound.

Nevertheless, I had to do something, for it would have been painful to be taken from St. Petersburg to Moscow in a box, with a square of milky whiteness preventing my seeing anything outside. I am not, thank God, like the Englishman who caused himself to be taken from London to Constantinople with a bandage over his eyes, to be taken off only when he entered the Golden Horn, so that he might enjoy abruptly, and without any enfeebling transition, that unrivalled and splendid panorama. So, pulling my fur cap down to my eyes, turning up the collar of my pelisse, which I drew close around me, pulling up my boots, and drawing on my hands huge mittens, — a regular Samoyede costume, — I proceeded bravely to the platform on the front of the carriage. A veteran, in a military overcoat, bearing several medals, stood there watching the speed of the train, apparently insensible to the cold. A small tip of a silver rouble, which he did not ask for but which he did not refuse, obligingly induced him to turn towards another part of the horizon while I lighted an excellent cigar purchased at

Eliseïef's, and which I drew from a box with a glass top which allows one to see the goods without having to break the Treasury stamp.

I was soon forced to throw away that genuine *Havana de la Vuelta de Abajo*, for while it was burning at one end it was freezing at the other; the ice glued it to my lips, a portion of which remained stuck to the cigar every time I removed it from my mouth. It is almost impossible to smoke in the open air when the temperature is ten below zero; and it is not difficult to obey the ukase which forbids pipe and cigar smoking outside. The prospect unfolded before me was, besides, interesting enough to compensate for this slight privation.

As far as the eye could reach the earth was covered with a cold covering of snow, the white folds of which faintly outlined the form of objects, somewhat as a shroud outlines the body it conceals. Roads, foot-paths, rivers, boundary marks of all kinds had vanished; nothing was visible but depressions and elevations not easily noticed in the general whiteness; the course of the frozen streams could only be told by a sort of valley meandering through the snow, and often entirely filled by it. Here and there emerged the leafless tops of

half-buried clumps of reddish birch; a few huts built of round logs and covered with snow sent up smoke and made dark spots upon the uniformly white surface. Along the railway showed lines of brushwood, planted in several rows, and intended to break, in its horizontal course, the white, icy snow, which is carried along with terrific impetuosity by blizzards, the khamsins of the Pole. It is impossible to imagine the strange, sad grandeur of that vast white landscape, which looks as does the pale moon seen through a telescope; one seems to be in a dead planet, petrified forever by eternal cold. The mind cannot believe that so amazing a quantity of snow can ever melt, be evaporated, or proceed to the sea in the swelling waters of the rivers, and that a spring day will make these Polar plains green and blooming. A low sky of uniform gray, which the whiteness of the earth caused to appear yellow, increased the melancholy of the landscape. A deep silence, broken only by the roar of the train on the rails, reigned over the solitude of the country, for snow deadens every sound with its ermine carpet. No living figure was to be seen upon the desert waste, no trace of man or animals, — the former were snugly ensconced by their isba fires, the animals within their dens.

Only, when drawing near a station, were to be seen issuing from some fold in the snow, sleighs and kibitkas, drawn at a gallop by little, long-maned horses, travelling across the fields, careless of the roads, which had disappeared, and coming from some unperceived village to meet travellers. In my compartment there were some young noblemen going out hunting, and wearing for the occasion handsome, brand-new tulupes, of a pale salmon colour, relieved by embroideries forming graceful arabesques. The tulupe is a sort of sheepskin caftan with the wool inside, as furs are always worn in really cold countries; it is fastened to the shoulder by a button, and bound around the waist by a belt; with an astrakhan cap, boots of white felt, and a hunting-knife in the belt, it forms a costume of the most Asiatic elegance. Although this is the moujik dress, noblemen do not hesitate to wear it under such circumstances, for it is the most commodious and best suited to the climate. Besides, the difference between a clean, soft tulupe, dressed like a glove, and the dirty, greasy, shining tulupe of the moujik, is thought sufficient to prevent any misunderstanding.

The birch and fir woods seen on the horizon, on which they show as a brown line, are inhabited by

wolves, bears, and sometimes, it is said, by elks, — the wild and fierce game of the North, the pursuit of which is not without peril, and which calls for agile, robust, and courageous Nimrods.

A troïka drawn by three splendid horses, was awaiting these young noblemen at one of the stations, and I saw them disappear in the distance with a rapidity in no wise inferior to that of the locomotive, travelling along the road completely covered up by snow, but marked at intervals by poles; at the rate they were going I soon lost sight of them. They were to meet their hunting companions at a château, the name of which I have forgotten, and reckoned on being more fortunate than the two fools in La Fontaine's fable, who sold the bear's skin before they had killed the animal; these young gentlemen expected to kill a bear, to keep the skin and to make out of it one of those rugs with scarlet border and stuffed head, on which newcomers never fail to stumble in the drawing-rooms of St. Petersburg. Their calm, deliberate air made me feel certain that they would prove successful.

I shall not mention the various places past which the railway runs, for they would not interest my readers. These towns and villages are usually unim-

portant, and are often quite distant from the railway; only the green bulbs and copper domes of their churches show above the snow. For the railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow follows inflexibly a straight line, and never turns aside under any pretext; it does not even honour Tver with a curve or an elbow; although it is the largest city upon the line, and the one from which start the Volga steamers, the railway passes proudly at a distance, and Tver is reached, according to the season, in a sleigh or a troïka.

The stations are built on a uniform plan and are magnificent. The architecture is agreeable, mingling the red tones of brick and the white tones of stone, but after seeing one, one has seen all. I shall therefore describe the station where we were expected for dinner. It is peculiar in this, that it is placed, not on the side of the railway, but in the centre of it, like the church of St. Mary-le-Strand. The railway encircles it with its iron ribbons, and it is at this point that the trains from Moscow and from St. Petersburg pass on sidings, landing on the right or left platform their travellers, who meet at the same table. The Moscow train meets the people from Archangel, Tobolsk, Viatka, Iakoutsk, the bank of the Amoor, the shores

of the Caspian, from Kazan, Tiflis, the Caucasus, the Crimea, from the farthest points of European and Asiatic Russia; and as they pass they shake hands with their acquaintances brought by the St. Petersburg train. It is a cosmopolitan feast, at which more languages are spoken than were heard in the Tower of Babel.

Broad arcaded bays, with two windows placed opposite each other, lighted the hall in which the table was laid; there was a pleasant hot-house temperature in which Bourbon palms, tulip trees, and other tropical plants extended their broad, silky leaves. This wealth of rare plants, which one does not expect to meet with in so cold a climate, is almost general in Russia; it brightens the interiors, rests the eyes, fatigued by the dazzling brilliancy of the snow, and preserves the tradition of verdure. The table was splendidly set, and covered with silver plate and glassware. A line of tall white bottles rose above the long, corked bottles of claret, covered with metallic caps, and the champagne bottles with lead caps. All the best brands were to be found there: Château Yquem, Haut Barsac, Château Laffitte, Gruau-Larose, Veuve Cliquot, Roederer, Moët, Sternberg Cabinet, and also all the famous

brands of English ale; a complete assortment of famous drinks, bedizened with gilded labels, in brightly coloured, attractive designs and authentic coats of arms. The best wines of France are drunk in Russia, and the purest juice of our harvests, the unpressed wine of our wine-presses, goes down these Northern throats, which never think of the cost of what they drink. Except chtchi soup, the cookery, it is needless to say, was French. Waiters in black coats, white cravats, and white gloves, moved around the tables, and did their work thoroughly and quietly.

Having satisfied my appetite, and while the travellers were emptying glasses of all manner of shapes, I looked at the two drawing-rooms situated at each end and reserved for illustrious personages, and at the elegant little stalls on which were exposed sashes, boots, Toula morocco slippers embroidered with gold and silver, Circassian carpets embroidered in silk upon a scarlet background, belts woven with gold threads, cases containing a platinum knife, fork, and spoon, inlaid with gold in charming taste, models of the cracked bell of the Kremlin, wooden Russian crosses carved with Chinese patience and covered with an infinite number of microscopic personages, — in a word, innumerable charming

trifles meant to attract the tourist and to diminish his possessions by a few roubles, unless, as is the case with myself, he has the strength to resist the lust of the eye and to be satisfied with merely looking at things. Yet it is very difficult when thinking of absent friends, not to purchase a number of these pretty things, which prove, when one returns home, that the absent were not forgotten, so that one always ends by giving in.

The meal had collected in the same hall the travellers who were scattered through the different carriages, and I noticed that when travelling, as when in town, the women appeared to feel the cold less than the men: most of them were satisfied with their fur-lined satin pelisses, and they did not pull up their collars around their heads, nor overload themselves with one garment upon another. No doubt feminine coquetry has something to do with this, for what is the use of having a good figure and a small foot, if one has to look like a bundle of wraps. A pretty Siberian girl attracted every one's eyes by her elegance, which travel did not interfere with in the slightest; she seemed to have just got out of her carriage at the Opera-house door. Two gipsy women, dressed with a quaint rich-

ness, struck me by the strangeness of their features, which their semi-civilised costume made more singular still; they laughed at the compliments of the young lords, and exhibited fairly white teeth, set in the brown gums characteristic of the Bohemian race.

On emerging from the warm room, the cold, as night approached, seemed to me sharper, in spite of the pelisse which I had put on, and as a matter of fact the thermometer had fallen some degrees; the snow was more intensely white, and screaked under foot like ground glass; sparkling atoms floated in the air and fell on the ground. It would not have been prudent to resume my position on the platform of the carriage: I might have compromised the future of my nose; besides, the landscape remained unchanged, one white waste following another, for in Russia vast spaces have to be traversed before the aspect of the horizon changes.

The veteran with the many medals filled the stove with wood, and the temperature of the carriage, which had somewhat fallen, soon rose; it was pleasantly warm, and but for the side motion, due to the hauling of the locomotive, I might have fancied myself in my own room.

The carriages of the inferior classes, installed less comfortably and less luxuriously, are heated in the same manner, for in Russia heat is provided for everybody; nobles and peasants are equal in the presence of the thermometer; palaces and huts are warmed to the same temperature. It is a question of life and death.

Lying down on the divan, my head resting on my hand-bag, covered over with my pelisse, I very soon fell asleep in thorough comfort, cradled by the regular motion of the train. When I awoke it was one in the morning, and it occurred to me to observe Northern nature at night for a few moments. Winter nights are long and dark in this latitude, but no darkness can quite extinguish the whiteness of the snow: under the most sombre sky its livid pallor can be made out, outspread like a mortuary cloth upon the vault of a tomb. Gleams of bluish phosphorescence show constantly on it; it indicates vanished objects by slight protuberances, and draws them on the black background of shadow, as with a white pencil. This pale landscape, the lines of which changed their axes and met repeatedly behind the train, had the strangest aspect; for one moment the moon, breaking through the thick bank of clouds, cast a cold beam upon the lighted plain, the lighted portions

of which were resplendent like silver, while the others were covered with bluish shades, proving the truth of Goethe's observation on the shadow made by snow, in his theory of colours. It is impossible to realise the gloom of the vast pallid horizon, which seemed to reflect the moon, and to return to it the light it received from it. It formed and re-formed constantly around the carriage, ever the same like the sea, and yet the engine was flying along at full speed, casting out from its funnel crackling showers of red sparks. But to the discouraged eye it seemed as though we should never emerge from the white circle. The cold, increased by the disturbance of the air, became intense and froze me to the marrow, in spite of my thick, soft furs; my breath was crystallising on my mustache, and forming a sort of ice gag: the lashes of my eyes were being glued together, and I felt, although I was standing, sleep almost irresistibly overpowering me. It was time to re-enter the carriage, for while the bitterest cold is bearable when there is no wind, the least breath of air sharpens its darts and the edge of its steel axe. Usually when the temperature is so low that the mercury freezes, the air is perfectly still; and one might traverse Siberia with a taper in the hand without the flame quivering;

with the least draught of air, however, a man would freeze even if wrapped up in the spoils of the best-furred inhabitants of the Pole.

It was a most agreeable sensation to plunge into the kindly atmosphere in the carriage, and to snuggle up in a corner, where I slept until dawn, with the peculiar feeling of pleasure which a man experiences when he is well sheltered from the rigours of the season, written on the panes in icy characters. "Gray morn" as Shakespeare calls it, — Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn" would get chilblains in this latitude, — gray morn was coming rapidly, in its pelisse, walking over the snow in its white felt boots. We were approaching Moscow, the dentellated crown of which could already be seen from the platform of the carriage, against the first flush of day.

To the Parisian it is not many years since Moscow appeared faintly in the dim distance like a sort of Aurora Borealis filling the heavens, in the light of the conflagration started by Rostopchine, its Byzantine diadem bristling with strange towers and steeples, standing out against the blaze of lightning and smoke. It was a fabulously splendid and chimerically distant city, a tiara of diamonds placed on a waste of snow, of

which the men who had returned in 1812 spoke with a sort of stupor, for in their case the city had turned into a volcano. Indeed before the invention of steamers and railways, a voyage to Moscow was no slight matter; it was even more difficult than a trip to Corinth, which, if the proverb is to be believed, everybody may not take.

When still a child Moscow filled my imagination, and I often remained in amazement and wonder on the Quay Voltaire, before the window of a dealer in engravings, in which were exhibited great panoramas of Moscow, in aqua-tinta, coloured by the Demarne or the Debucourt process, as was so frequently the case at that time. The bulb-shaped steeples, the domes surmounted with crosses and chains, the painted houses, the people with broad beards and flaring hats, the women wearing the povoïniks, and short tunics with the waist under the arms, — seemed to me to belong to a world in the moon; and the idea of travelling thither had never occurred to my mind; besides, since Moscow had been burned down, what interest could a heap of ashes have? It took me a long time to realise that the city had been rebuilt, and that all the old monuments had not disappeared in the flames. Now, in less than half an hour

I should be able to judge whether the aqua-tintas of the Quay Voltaire were accurate or not.

At the station there was a multitude of izvotchiks offering their sleighs to travellers and trying to obtain the preference. I chose two of them; I got into the one sleigh, with my companion, and our trunks were put into the other. In accordance with the custom of Russian coachmen, who never wait to be told whither one desires to drive, our men sent off their animals on a preliminary canter, in the direction they themselves fancied. They never fail to indulge in this sort of fantasia.

Snow had fallen much more abundantly in Moscow than in St. Petersburg, and the sleigh track, the edges of which had been carefully shovelled up, was more than eighteen inches above the level of the pavements, that had been cleared. Upon this thick layer, polished by the runners of sleighs, our light equipages went like the wind, the horses' hoofs sending, thick as hail, pieces of hardened snow against the dashboard. The street through which we were driving was bordered by public vapour baths, for water baths are not much used in Russia; if the people look dirty, it is apparently so only, and is due to the winter clothing, which is not

often renewed; but there is not a woman in Paris, making abundant use of cold cream, rice powder, and toilet waters, who is cleaner than a moujik emerging from a vapour bath. The poorest go at least once a week. These baths are taken in common, without distinction of sex, and cost only a few kopecks. Of course for the rich there are more luxurious establishments, with all the refinements of the art of bathing.

After rushing along at a mad speed for some time, our coachmen, considering that they had taken sufficient advantage of us, turned around on their box and asked us whither we were going. We named the Hotel Chevrier, on the Pereoulok Gazetny. They started again, this time towards a definite point. On the way I eagerly looked from right to left, without noting anything very characteristic. Moscow is formed of concentric zones; the outer one is the more modern and least interesting. The Kremlin, which formerly contained the whole city, is now the heart and marrow of it.

Above the houses, which were not very different from those of St. Petersburg, rose at times azure domes starred with gold, or bulbous steeples roofed with tin. A church in rococo style showed its façade painted a

bright red, and quaintly touched up with snow on every projection. At other times the glance rested upon a chapel painted blue, which the winter had glazed with silver here and there. The question of polychrome architecture, so vigorously discussed even now with us, has long since been settled in Russia. The buildings are gilded, silvered, painted in every possible colour, without the least care for good taste and sobriety as understood by pseudo-classics; for it is certain that the Greeks overlaid their monuments, and even their statues, with divers colours. Very agreeable indeed is this rich palette applied to architecture, which in the West is condemned to warm grays, neutral yellows, and dirty whites.

The shop signs exhibited, like golden ornaments, the beautiful letters of the Russian alphabet, which have a Greek aspect and might be employed in decorative friezes like Cufic characters. A translation is given for the benefit of the uncultured and the foreigners, in the form of artless representations of the objects contained in the shops.

We soon reached the hotel, the main portion of which, covered with wood, contained under its sheds a strikingly varied collection of vehicles, — sleighs,

troïkas, tarentasses, drojkis, kibitkas, post-chaises, barouches, landaus, wagonettes, winter and summer carriages,—for in Russia no one goes on foot; if a servant goes out to fetch cigars, he takes a sleigh to traverse the hundred yards which lie between him and the tobacconist's shop. We were given rooms adorned with mirrors, hung with papers of large patterns, and sumptuously furnished like the great hotels in Paris. There was not the slightest vestige of local colour, but on the other hand, all the implements of modern comfort. However much of a Romanticist one may be, it is easy to resign one's self to this, for civilisation has much influence even upon dispositions that most rebel against its love of ease. There was nothing Russian, save the great, green leather sofa on which it is so pleasant to sleep rolled up in a fur coat.

Having hung up my heavy travelling-garments and washed myself, it occurred to me it would be wise to have breakfast before starting out to visit the city, so as not to be disturbed in my admiration by hunger, and compelled to return to the hotel from some absurdly distant quarter. The meal was served in a glass hall, arranged as a winter garden, with tall exotic plants. It is a curious sensation to eat in Moscow a beefsteak

with soufflé potatoes, in a miniature virgin forest. The waiter who took our orders, standing near the table, had, though he wore a black coat and a white cravat, the yellow complexion, prominent cheek-bones, and small flat nose which betrayed his Mongolian origin, and proved that he must have been born not far from the frontier of China, in spite of his looking like a waiter of the Café Anglais.

As it is not possible to observe comfortably the peculiarities of a city when one is carried along in a sleigh flying like the wind, I resolved, at the risk of being taken for a poverty-stricken individual, and of drawing down on myself the contempt of the moujiks, to make my first excursion on foot, wearing heavy furred galoshes intended to protect the soles of my shoes from the icy cold pavement. I soon reached Kitaïgorod or business quarter, and the Krasnaïa Square, the Red Square, or rather the Beautiful Square; for in Russia the words "red" and "beautiful" are synonymous. One side of this square is occupied by the Gostiny Dvor, a vast bazaar cut by streets, glazed over like our passages in Paris, and which contains no less than six thousand shops. The wall enclosing the Kremlin rises at the other end, with its gates cut in

towers with painted roofs; over the battlements are seen the domes, steeples, and spires of the churches and convents it contains. At the other end rises, like a chimera, the impossible church of Vassily Blajenny, or Cathedral of St. Basil, which makes one doubt the evidence of one's eyesight. Apparently it is real, yet it seems to be a fantastical mirage, a cloud edifice curiously coloured by the sun, which the motion of the air will presently deform or destroy. It is unquestionably the most original building in the world. It recalls nothing ever before seen, and belongs to no style whatever. It looks like a giant madrepore, a colossal crystallisation, an inverted stalactite grotto; but it is useless to seek for comparisons to give an idea of a thing which has neither prototype nor analogy. Let me rather try to describe Vassily Blajenny, if there exists a vocabulary which will enable me to speak of what has not been anticipated.

There is told, about the Vassily Blajenny, a legend which is probably untrue, but which none the less expresses strongly the poetry and feeling of stupefied admiration which this very singular edifice, so completely outside of all architectural tradition, must have produced upon the men of the semi-barbaric epoch

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Cathedral of St. Isaac's, St. Petersburg

when it was constructed. It was built by Ivan the Terrible, as a thank-offering for the taking of Kazan. When it was finished he thought it so beautiful, wonderful, and surprising that he ordered the architect — an Italian, it is said — to be blinded, so that henceforth he should be unable to build a similar church anywhere else. According to another version of the same legend, the Czar asked the architect if he could not build a still handsomer church, and on his replying affirmatively, he had him beheaded, in order that the Vassily Blajenny should remain an unrivalled monument. It is impossible to conceive of a piece of cruelty more flattering in its very jealousy, and Ivan the Terrible must have been at bottom a genuine artist, a passionate dilettante. I own that such flattery in matters of art is less unpleasant to me than indifference. What is certain is that Vassily Blajenny is unique.

Imagine placed on a sort of platform and isolated by slopes, the strangest and most incoherent mass, a prodigious heaping up of cabins, cells, outer staircases, arcaded galleries, unexpected and endless projections, unsymmetrical porches, chapels cheek by jowl, windows cut at hap-hazard, indescribable forms which are the outward expressions of the interior arrangements, as if

the architect, seated in the centre of his work, had made a repoussé building. From the roof of this church, which might be mistaken for a Hindoo, Chinese, or Thibetan pagoda, springs a forest of steeples in the strangest taste, and of unapproachable fancifulness. The centre one, which is the highest and the most massive, has three to four stories from the base to the spire. First, small pillars and denticulated bands, then pilasters framing in tall mullioned windows; then a scale-like series of superimposed arches; on the sides of the spire wart-like crockets dentellating each rib, and over all a small lantern surmounted by an overset golden bulb bearing the Russian cross. The other steeples, of less size and height, affect the shape of minarets, and their fantastically traceried turrets end in the queer swelling of their onion-like cupolas. Some have hammered facets; others are ribbed; others are lozenged like pineapples; others rayed with spiral lines; others again imbricated with scales, with lozenges, or goffered like a honey-comb. And all bear on their summit a cross adorned with golden balls.

What still further adds to the fantastic effect of Vassily Blajenny is that it is painted from top to bottom in the most discordant tones, producing a har-

monious *ensemble* pleasing to the eye: red, blue, pale-green, yellow, bring out the various portions of the design. The small pillars and capitals, the arches, the ornaments, are painted in different tints, which makes them stand out strongly. On a few flat surfaces have been simulated divisions, panels enclosing pots of flowers, roses, knots, monsters. The decorators have adorned the domes and belfries with figured patterns like those of India shawls; thus placed on a church roof they look like Sultans' kiosks. Hittorf, the apostle of polychrome architecture, would find here a startling confirmation of his theory. To add to the magic beauty of the spectacle, the diapered robe of Vassily Blajenny was strewn with particles of snow, marking the projections of the roofs, the friezes, and the ornaments, and covering the marvellous decoration with innumerable sparkling points.

Postponing my visit to the Kremlin, I at once entered the church, the strangeness of which excited my curiosity to the highest pitch, in order to see whether the interior fulfilled the promise of the exterior. The same erratic genius had developed the planning and the ornamentation of the interior. A low outer chapel, in which twinkled a few lamps, looked like a

golden grotto; unexpected gleams flashed amid the ruddy shadows, and made the stiff images of the Greek saints stand out like phantoms. The mosaics in St. Mark's, at Venice, can alone give an approximate idea of this amazingly rich effect. At the back the Ikonastas rose like a wall of gold and gems, between the faithful and the arcana of the sanctuary. In the semi-obscurity traversed by beams of light Vassily Blajenny is not like other churches. Composed of a single structure, of several connecting naves, cut at certain points of intersection, in accordance with the ritual of the Church, — it consists of a number of separate churches and chapels, brought together. Each steeple contains a church which fits as well as it can within its confines. The vaulting is the sheath of the spire or the bulb of the cupola. One seems to be standing under the vast helmet of some Circassian or Tartar giant. In addition these caps are marvellously painted and gilded internally, and so are the walls, covered with figures of conventional hieratic barbarism, the models of which the Greek monks of Mt. Athos have preserved during centuries, and which in Russia often lead astray the inattentive observer as regards the age of a building.

It is a strange sensation to find one's self in these

mysterious sanctuaries in which the well-known personages of Catholic worship, mingling with the saints peculiar to the Greek calendar, seem, with their archaic, Byzantine, and constrained attitudes, to have been awkwardly translated into gold by the childish devotion of some primitive tribe. These images, looking like idols, which gaze at you through the cut-out parts of the silver plates of the Ikonostas, or stand in tall and symmetrical fashion upon the gilded walls, opening wide their staring eyes, and their brown hands with the fingers folded in diabolical fashion, — produce, with their grim, extra-human, immutably traditional aspect, a religious impression that works of more advanced art would not make. These figures, amid the gleaming gold and the trembling light of the lamps, easily acquire a fantastic life capable of striking imaginations and of inspiring, as the day diminishes, a certain sacred awe.

Narrow corridors, galleries with low arches, each corner of which touches the walls, and forces you to bend the head, run around these chapels, which may thus be reached in a succession. Most fantastic are these passages ; the architect seems to have delighted in mixing them up, — you ascend, descend, leave the church, re-enter it ; you circle the bulb of a steeple, by

walking along a cornice, you travel in the thickness of the wall, through narrow, tortuous windings resembling the capillary tubes of madrepores, or the paths cut by worms under the bark of wood. After so many twistings and windings, your head begins to spin around, you fall a victim to vertigo, and you fancy yourself a mollusk within a huge shell. I pass over the mysterious corners, the inexplicable cæcums, the low doors leading no one knows whither, the dark stairs which sink into the depths; else I should never be done with this building, in which one seems to be walking in a dream.

Winter days are very short in Russia, and the shades of twilight were beginning to bring out more brilliantly the lamps before the images of the saints, when I left Vassily Blajenny, taking this sample of the picturesque riches of Moscow as a good omen. I had just experienced the rare sensation in search of which a traveller will proceed to the very ends of the world. I had seen something which does not exist anywhere else. So I confess that the bronze group of Minine and Pojarsky, placed near the Gostiny Dvor and facing the Kremlin, impressed me but little as a work of art; the sculptor, Martos, does not lack for talent, but by comparison

with the fancifulness of Vassily Blajenny, his works struck me as too cold, too correct, too sagely academical. Minine was a butcher in Nijni-Novgorod, and raised an army to drive out the Poles, who had made themselves masters of Moscow, after the usurpation of Boris Godounof; he handed over the command of his troops to Prince Pojarsky, and the pair of them, the man of the people and the nobleman, drove the foreigners from the Holy City. On the pedestal, adorned with bronze *bassi-relievi*, is this inscription: "To the Townsman, Minine, and to Prince Pojarsky, Grateful Russia, 1818."

I make it a rule when travelling, and not too much pressed for time, to stop after a strong impression; there comes a moment when the eye, saturated with form and colour, refuses to absorb new aspects; nothing more can enter it, as in an over-full vase; the previous image persists, and cannot be effaced. In that condition one goes on looking without seeing; the retina has not time to become sensitive to a new impression. That was my case when I left Vassily Blajenny, and I felt I must rest my eyes before seeing the Kremlin. So, having cast a last glance at the extravagant belfries of Ivan the Terrible's cathedral, I was about to call a

sleigh to return to my hotel, when I was stopped on the Krasnaïa by a strange noise that made me look up.

Crows and ravens were crossing the gray sky, punctuating it with dark commas as they went croaking along. They were returning to the Kremlin to roost; but this was only the vanguard; soon arrived denser cohorts from all points of the horizon, making up bands that appeared to obey the orders of their leaders and to follow a strategical line; the black swarms did not all fly at the same height, but in superimposed zones, literally darkening the air. Their numbers increased every minute; their croaks and the flapping of their wings made a deafening noise, while new phalanxes constantly appeared above my head, adding their numbers to the prodigious assembly. I had not supposed there were so many crows in the whole world; without any exaggeration there were hundreds of thousands of them; even these figures strike me as modest, and it would be more correct to say there were millions. It made me think of those flights of wood pigeons of which Audubon, the American ornithologist, speaks, which obscure the sky and cast a shadow on the earth like the clouds; they break down the forests upon which they alight, and do not appear to be diminished

by the tremendous number massacred by sportsmen. The innumerable army having effected its concentration, was swooping over the Kremlin, ascending, descending, describing circles, with the roar of a tempest. Finally the whirlwind seemed to make up its mind, and each bird winged its way to its own night-roost. Instantly steeples, domes, towers, roofs, battlements, were enshrouded in black whirlwinds and deafening calls; the birds were fighting for positions, — the least opening, the narrowest fissure which could offer a shelter, became the object of a bitter siege. Little by little the tumult died away, every bird settled itself as comfortably as it could, not a single croak was to be heard, not a single crow to be seen; and the heavens, a moment ago covered with black points, resumed their crepuscular lividity. On what can these myriads of sinister birds live? for they would make but one meal of all the bodies strewn behind a rout, especially when the ground is covered for six months with a heavy shroud of snow; the garbage, the dead animals and the corpses of the city cannot possible suffice for them; perhaps they eat each other, as rats do in times of famine, but in that case their numbers would not be so considerable, and they would end by disappearing; besides, they

appear vigorous, full of animation and joyous turbulence. Their source of nourishment is a mystery to me, and proves that the instincts of animals find in nature resources concealed from man's intelligence.

My companion, who had watched this spectacle with me, but without any astonishment, for it was not the first time he had seen the Kremlin crows going to roost, said: "Since we are on the Krasnaïa, right on the spot and within two steps of the most famous Russian restaurant in Moscow, do not let us go back to the hotel for dinner; we should have a pretentiously French meal; your traveller's stomach, broken to exotic dishes, is complacent enough to admit local colour in cookery, and to allow that what can feed one man can well feed another. So let us enter here; we shall have chtchi, caviare, sucking pig, Volga sturgeon, with ogourtzis and horse-radish sauce; and we shall wash it all down with kwass — for a man must know everything — and iced champagne. How does that bill of fare strike you?"

On my replying affirmatively, my friend and guide led me to the restaurant situated at the end of the Gostiny Dvor, opposite the Kremlin. We ascended the well-heated stair, and entered a vestibule which

looked like a furrier's shop. The waiters quickly took off our pelts and hung them near the others on the coat-rack. Russian servants never make a mistake with pelisses, and at once put your own on your shoulders, without using numbers or other forms of checking. In the first room was a sort of bar, covered with bottles of kummel, vodka, cognac, and other liquors, caviare, herring, anchovy, smoked beef, elk and rainbow tongues, cheese, and pickles, — delicacies which are intended to give one an appetite and are eaten standing, before the meal. One of those Cremona organs with trumpets and drums, which Italians drag about the streets, placed on a little carriage drawn by a horse, stood against the wall, and a moujik, turning the handle, treated us to some operatic airs. The numerous rooms opening one into another, with the blue smoke of the cigars and pipes floating close to the ceiling, extended so far that a second barrel-organ, placed at the other end, played a different air from that in the first room, without causing any discord; and so the guests dined between Donizetti and Verdi.

A characteristic feature of this restaurant was that the service, instead of being done by Tartars disguised as waiters, as in the Frères-Provençaux, was simply in-

trusted to moujiks, and one had at least the sensation of being in Russia. These moujiks, young and well-made, their hair parted in the middle, their beards carefully combed, their necks bare, wearing a rose or white summer tunic, drawn in at the waist, full blue trousers tucked in their boots, forming an easy national costume, — looked very well and naturally elegant. Most of them were fair, their hair of a chestnut brown, which is the legendary colour of Jesus Christ's hair; and the features of some of them were marked by a Greek regularity, which is met with in Russia oftener among men than among women. Thus dressed, and in an attitude of waiting respectfully, they looked like antique slaves on the threshold of the triclinium. After dinner we smoked pipes of strong Russian tobacco, and drank two or three glasses of caravan tea, for in Russia it is not drunk in cups, — while, very much satisfied at having eaten local colour, I listened inattentively to the airs played by the barrel-organs, which sounded through the confused murmur of the conversations.

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Travels in Russia

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

THE KREMLIN

WITH us, people are apt to imagine that the Kremlin is blackened by time, and has the dark, smoky tone of our old buildings, which contributes to their beauty by making it venerable. We carry this notion so far as to wash the new parts of buildings with soot mixed with water, in order to give them a patina that shall destroy the crude whiteness of the stone and harmonise it with the older portions. One needs to have attained a very high degree of civilisation to understand this feeling, to prize the traces which the passage of centuries have left upon the epiderm of temples, palaces, and fortresses. Like people who are still young and artless, the Russians are fond of what is new or looks as if it were new; and they believe they prove their respect for a monument by renewing its coat of paint as soon as it begins to scale or fall away. They are the greatest whitewashers in the

world. Even the old frescoes in the Byzantine taste, which adorn the interior of the churches, and very often the exterior, are re-painted when the colours seem to be fading, so that these paintings, so solemnly antique in appearance, and so primitively barbaric, have sometimes been renovated but a few days before. It is not a rare sight to behold a dauber perched on a frame scaffolding, touching up a Madonna with as much coolness as if he were a monk of Mt. Athos, and filling with fresh colours the austere contour which is itself but an unchangeable pattern. So one must be extremely prudent in appreciating these paintings, which once were old, if I may thus put it, but which are now wholly modern, in spite of their hieratic stiffness and quaintness.

This little preamble has no other object than to prepare the reader for the white and coloured aspect of the Kremlin, instead of the sombre, melancholy, and grim look which his Western notions had led him to expect.

Formerly the Kremlin, at all times considered the Acropolis, the holy place, the palladium, and the very heart of Russia, — was surrounded by a palisade of heavy oaken logs. The citadel of Athens was not otherwise defended before the first invasion of the

Persians. Dimitri Donskoï replaced the palisade by crenelated walls, which, on account of their state of decay and ruin, were rebuilt by Czar Ivan III. It is Ivan III's wall which still subsists to-day, but which has been frequently restored and rebuilt in more than one portion. Besides, thick layers of whitewash prevent one perceiving the wounds made by time, and the black traces of the fire of 1812, which, for the matter of that, merely licked the outer walls with its fiery tongues. The Kremlin somewhat resembles the Alhambra: like the Moorish fortress it stands on the plateau of a hill; enclosed within its walls, flanked by towers, it contains royal dwellings, churches, squares, and among the older buildings a modern palace, which fits in as unpleasantly as the palace of Charles V. in the delicate Arab architecture which it crushes with its weight. The tower of Ivan Veliki, is not unlike the Vela tower, and from the Kremlin, as from the Alhambra, one has a wonderful prospect, — a panorama the dazzling beauty of which remains forever in the mind. But I must not carry this parallel farther, lest I should exaggerate it.

Strange to say, the Kremlin, seen from outside, is rather more Eastern-looking than the Alhambra itself,

with its massive, reddish towers, the inward magnificence of which nothing suggests. Above the wall, with its scalloped crenelations, between the towers with richly wrought roofs, myriads of domes, bulbous belfries, with metallic reflections and sudden flashes of light, seem to ascend and descend, like brilliant golden bubbles; the wall, glistering like a silver basket, encloses this bouquet of gilded flowers, and it is as if one really saw one of those fairy sites such as the imagination of Arab story-tellers builds so lavishly, — an architectural crystallisation of the Thousand and One Nights. And when Winter dusts with its diamond-like mica these edifices as strange as dreams, one could really believe one's self transported into another planet, for on nothing like this has the glance ever fallen.

I entered the Kremlin by the Spasskiia or Saviour's Gate, which opens on the Krasnaïa; it is cut in a huge square tower, in front of a sort of porch; the tower itself has three stories, diminishing in size, and is topped by a spire resting upon arcades. A double-headed eagle, holding in its talons the orb of the world, surmounts the sharp point of the spire, which is octagonal, like the story immediately below, and ribbed and gilded on the sides. Each face of the second story

contains a huge dial, so that the tower tells the time to every point of the compass. Add, by way of effect, to the projections of the building a few touches of snow, put on like high lights in body-colour, and you will have a faint idea of the aspect of that superb tower which springs in three jets above the denticulated wall in which it forms a break.

The Spasskiia Gate is the object of such veneration in Russia, on account of a miraculous image or legend, concerning which I could not obtain accurate information, that no one passes under it with covered head, not even the Czar himself; a failure in this respect is considered an act of sacrilege, and might prove perilous; foreigners are therefore informed of the custom. It is not simply a question of bowing to the holy images on the entrance of the porch, before which burn everlasting lamps, but one has to remain bareheaded until one has passed through altogether. Now, it is not a pleasant thing to have to hold your fur cap in your hand when the cold is ten below zero, and this in a long passage through which blows an icy blast; but every one must conform to the usages of nations, and take off one's cap under the Spasskiia Gate, or one's boots on the threshold of the Souleïman

Mosque, or St. Sophia's. A true traveller never objects, even if he were to catch the worst possible cold in the head.

After passing through this gate one enters upon the esplanade of the Kremlin, amid the most splendid medley of palaces, churches, and convents which it is possible to imagine. They have no relation to any known style; they are neither Greek nor Byzantine, nor Gothic, Arab, or Chinese; they are Russian and Muscovite. Never has a freer, more original architecture, one more careless of rules, more Romanticist, in a word, realised its caprices with such fancifulness. The surfaces occasionally look like chance crystallisations. However, this style, which seems to obey no law, is easily recognised at a glance by its characteristic domes and golden bulbous steeples.

Below this esplanade, on which the principal buildings of the Kremlin are grouped, and which forms the plateau of the hill, winds, following the changes of the ground, the rampart with its warders' walk, flanked with towers of infinite variety, some round, some square, others slender as minarets, others massive as bastions, with collarettes of battlements, stories set back, gambrel roofs, open galleries, lanterns, spires,

scale-work, rib-work, every possible manner of roofing a tower. The crenelations cut deep into the wall; their tops in the shape of the barbed head of an arrow, are alternately filled up or pierced by a barbican. I am not a judge of the value of such a defence from a strategic point of view, but from that of poetry it fully satisfies the imagination, and gives the impression of a formidable citadel.

Between the rampart and the terre-plein, which is bordered by a balustrade, extend gardens, at present covered with snow, and rises a picturesque little church with bulbous steeples. Beyond, as far as the eye can reach, stretches the vast and wondrous panorama of Moscow; the saw-like crest of the wall forms an admirable foreground, and throws back the vistas of the horizon in a way that no art could improve upon.

The Moskva, about as broad and as sinuous as the Seine, encloses the whole of this side of the Kremlin, and from the esplanade looked like a frozen abyss of opaque glass, for the snow had been swept from the spot I was looking at, to make a track for trotters being trained for sleigh races on the ice.

The revetment of the quay, which is bordered by splendid modern hotels and mansions, forms a sub-

structure of firm lines for the vast sea of houses, the roofs of which extend beyond it into the infinite, and are set off by the perspective and the height of the point of view.

A fine hard frost, — words that would make Méry shiver with horror, for that chilly poet pretends that every frost is hideous, — a fine hard frost having cleared the sky of its great uniform tint of yellowish gray, drawn the night before like a curtain over the darkened horizon, the circular canvas of the panorama was of a fairly bright azure, and the increased cold, which crystallised the snow, made the brilliancy of the latter greater still. A pale sunbeam, such as shines in the month of January in Moscow, on these short winter days which recall the nearness of the Pole, falling obliquely on the city, spread out fan-wise around the Kremlin, touched the snow-covered roofs, and here and there made them sparkle. Above the white roofs, which looked like the foam flecks of a petrified tempest, uprose, like ships stranded on reefs, the higher masses of the public buildings, of the churches and the convents. It is said that Moscow contains more than three hundred churches and convents; I do not know whether the figures are exact or merely hyperbolical,

but they sound probable when one looks at the city from the top of the Kremlin, which itself contains many cathedrals and religious edifices.

It is impossible to imagine anything more beautiful, richer, more splendid and more fairy-like than the domes surmounted by Greek crosses, the bulbous belfries, the hexagonal or octagonal spires, with moulded ribs and tracery which swell out or flash up over the motionless tumult of the snow-covered roofs; the gilded cupolas have reflections of marvellous transparency, and the light is concentrated on their salient points in the form of a star shining like a lamp. Some of the churches with silver or tin domes, seem to be roofed with moons. Farther on are helms of azure, constellated with gold; caps made of plates of beaten copper, imbricated like dragons' scales; or else overset onions, painted green and glazed with a thin, shining veneer of snow; then, as the distance grows greater, the details vanish, even when a glass is used, and nothing can be seen but the brilliant mass of domes, spires, towers, campaniles, of every imaginable shape, their outlines showing dark against the bluish tint of the distance, and their projections standing out, thanks to a spangle of gold, silver, copper, sapphire, or emerald. To com-

plete the picture imagine, over the cold, bluish tints of the snow, a few long and gentle gleams of faint purple, the pale roses of a Polar sunset strewn over the ermine carpet of a Russian winter.

No city gives such an impression of absolute novelty; not even Venice, for which Canaletto, Guardi, Bonington, Joyant, Wild, Ziem, and photographs prepare one long beforehand. Hitherto Moscow has not been much visited by artists, and its quaint aspects have rarely been reproduced; the severe Northern climate adds to the peculiarity of the picture by the effects of snow, the strange colour of the heavens, the quality of the light, which is not the same as with us and requires of Russian painters a special scale of colour, the truthfulness of which it is difficult to understand when one has not visited the country. On the esplanade of the Kremlin, with the panorama of Moscow stretched out before one, one really feels in a foreign country, and a Frenchman, the most in love with Paris, does not regret the gutter of the Rue du Bac.

The Kremlin contains within its walls a great number of churches, or cathedrals as the Russians call them; so the Acropolis, on its narrow plateau, held a great number of temples. I shall visit them one after

another, but I shall first stop at the tower of Ivan Veliky, — a huge, octagonal belfry, with three stories, each narrower than the lower one, and the last of which, above the zone of ornaments, assumes the form of a round turret and ends in a swelling cupola, gilded with ducat gold and surmounted with a Greek cross set upon a crescent. At each story an arcade cut out on the side of the tower allows the bronze bells to be seen. There are thirty-three of them ; one is said to be the famous alarm-bell of Novgorod, the sound of which summoned the people to tumultuous deliberations on the public square. One of these bells weighs over sixty-five tons, and the great bell of Notre-Dame, of which Quasimodo was so proud, would by the side of this monstrous mass of metal look like a mere hand-bell used in the service of the mass.

It seems that the Russians are passionately fond of colossal bells, for close to the tower of Ivan Veliky the amazed tourist perceives on a granite base a bell so enormous it might be taken for a bronze tent, especially as a broad fissure forms in the side a sort of door, which a man could easily enter without bending his head. It was cast by order of the Empress Anne, and two hundred tons of metal were used in the casting.

It was de Montferrand, the French architect of St. Isaac's, who hauled it up, and drew it out of the ground in which it was half buried, either through the violence of its fall while it was being hoisted, or in consequence of a fire or a break-down. Can such a mass ever have been swung? Did the iron clapper ever send out a sonorous tempest from that mysterious capsule? History and legend are mute on this point. Perhaps, like some of the ancient peoples who left in their abandoned camps beds twelve cubits long, to make those who came after believe they belonged to a race of giants, the Russians may have wished by casting this bell, out of all proportions to human uses to give to distant posterity a gigantic idea of themselves, if after the lapse of many centuries the bell were found in the course of excavations. However it may be, it is beautiful, like all things which surpass ordinary dimensions. The gracefulness of enormity, a mysterious and grim but real gracefulness, is not lacking. The sides are formed of ample and powerful curves, circled by delicate ornamentation; it is surmounted by a globe with a cross upon it; its clear-cut outlines and the patina of the metal please the eye; while the fissure itself opens like the mouth of a bronze cavern, myste-

rious and sombre. At the foot of the pedestal is placed, like the detached knocker of a gate, a fragment of metal which was broken out of the bell.

But I have talked enough about bells. Let us enter one of the most ancient and most characteristic cathedrals of the Kremlin, the first one to be built in stone, the Cathedral Ouspensky, or Cathedral of the Assumption. It is true that this is not the original building founded by Ivan Kalita, which fell after a century and a half of existence, and was rebuilt by Ivan III, so that the existing cathedral does not go back farther than the fifteenth century, in spite of its Byzantine air and its archaic aspect. One is surprised to learn that it is the work of Fioraventi, the Bolognese architect, whom the Russians call Aristoteles, perhaps on account of his great learning. One would naturally suppose that it was a Greek architect who had been called from Constantinople, his head still filled with St. Sophia's and the types of Greek oriental architecture. The Assumption is almost a square, and its great walls rise up with surprising and superb upward rush. Four enormous pillars, as big as towers and as mighty as the pilasters of the palace at Karnak, support the central dome, which is placed upon a flat

roof, in the Asiatic style, and flanked by four smaller cupolas. This simple arrangement produces a grandiose effect, and the massive pillars give, without seeming heavy, a firm base and an extraordinary stability to the mass of the cathedral.

The whole interior of the church is covered with paintings in Byzantine style, upon gold backgrounds; the pillars themselves are covered with figures painted in zones as on the columns of Egyptian temples and palaces. Curious indeed is this form of decoration, in which you are surrounded by thousands of figures as by a mute multitude, ascending and descending the walls, walking in files in Christian processions, isolating themselves in attitudes of hieratic stiffness, following the curve of the pendentives, of the vaulting, of the cupolas, and clothing the temple with a human tapestry, swarming motionless and troublous. The mysterious effect is increased by the paucity of light, which is skilfully managed. The great grim saints of the Greek calendar, assume in their tawny, ruddy shadows, a formidable life-like look; they gaze upon you with their fixed eyes, and seem to threaten you with their hands outstretched in blessing. The militant archangels, the holy knights with elegant and bold mien,

mingle their brilliant armour with the dark robes of the old monks and anachorets. They have the pride of port, the trace of antique outlines which mark the figures of Panselinos, the Byzantine painter, master of the monk of Aghia Lavra. The interior of St. Mark's at Venice, which looks like a gilded grotto, gives an idea of the Cathedral of the Assumption; only, the nave of the Muscovite church springs heavenwards, while the vaulting of St. Mark's mysteriously presses down like a crypt.

The Ikonostas, a high gilded wall of five stories of figures, looks like the façade of a golden palace, and dazzles the eye with its fabulous magnificence. Through the chasing of the goldsmith-work the Mother of God and the saints pass their brown heads and hands; their aureoles in relief, catching the light make the facets of their incrusted gems sparkle in the sunbeams, and flame like genuine haloes; upon the images, which are the objects of peculiar veneration, are hung pectorals of precious stones, necklaces, bracelets, constellated with diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, amethysts, and turquoises. The craze of religious luxury could not possibly be carried farther. What beautiful decorative motives are these Ikono-

stases, veils of gilded gems, stretched between the faith of the faithful and the mysteries of the Holy Sacrifice. It must be acknowledged that the Russians have admirably turned them to account, and that as regards magnificence the Greek religion is in no wise inferior to the Catholic, even though it does not equal it in the domain of pure art.

There is preserved in the Cathedral of the Assumption, in a casket of priceless value, the tunic of our Lord. Two other reliquaries, blazing with gems, contain a piece of the Virgin's dress and a nail from the True Cross. The Vladimir Virgin painted by the hand of St. Luke — the image of which the Russians look upon as a palladium, and the exhibition of which caused the fierce hordes of Timour to retreat — is adorned with a single diamond, estimated to be worth more than one hundred thousand francs. The mass of goldsmith-work in which it is set has no doubt cost twice or thrice as much. This form of luxury would strike a man of delicate taste, more attracted by beauty than wealth, as somewhat barbaric, but it cannot be denied that the mass of gold, diamonds, and pearls does actually produce a religious and superb effect. These Virgins, whose jewel-cases are better filled than those of queens

and empresses, impress artless piety; they shine in the shadows, in the faint light of the lamps, with supernatural beams, and their diamond crowns scintillate like starry coronets.

From the centre of the vaulting hangs an immense, massive, silver lustre, beautifully worked, of circular shape, which replaces the former lustre, of great weight, carried away during the French invasion; forty-six branches are fitted to it.

It is in the Cathedral of the Assumption that the Emperors are crowned; the platform reserved for the sovereign stands between four pillars which support the cupola, and is placed opposite the Ikonostas. The tombs of the Metropolitans of Moscow are against the side walls; they are of oblong form; in the penumbra in which they are enveloped, they resemble trunks ready packed for the great voyage of Eternity.

The Arkhanghelsky, or Archangel Cathedral, the façade of which is turned obliquely towards the Ouspensky Cathedral, distant a few steps only, — is not essentially different in plan; it has the same system of bulbous domes, massive pillars, Ikonostases brilliant with gold, Byzantine paintings covering the interior of the edifice like sacred tapestry. Only in this church

the paintings are not upon gilded backgrounds, and resemble frescoes more than mosaics. They represent scenes of the Last Judgment, and the haughty, grim-faced portraits of the old Russian Czars.

Here are the tombs of these Czars covered with cashmeres and rich stuffs like the turbehs of the Sultans in Constantinople; they are sober, simple, and severe; Death is not made pretty, with the delicate efflorescence of Gothic art, which has found in mortuary sculpture its happiest themes for ornamentation; there are no kneeling angels, no theological virtues, no emblematical weeping figures, no saints in traceried niches, no fantastic lambrequins wreathed around coats of arms, no knights in armour, their heads resting on a marble cushion and their feet upon a sleeping lion; — nothing but the body within its funereal box, covered over with the mortuary pall. No doubt it is a loss for art, but a gain for religious impression.

In the Cathedral Blagoviestchensky, or Cathedral of the Annunciation, at the back of the Czar's palace, is shown a very curious and very rare painting, which represents the Angel Gabriel appearing to the Blessed Virgin, to announce to her that she is to be the Mother

of the Son of God; the interview, like that of Jesus and the woman of Samaria, takes place near a well. According to the tradition of the Greek church, it was later, after her humble acquiescence in the will of the Lord, that the Blessed Virgin was visited in her chamber by the Holy Ghost. This scene, painted on the tower wall of the church, is protected against the weather by a sort of awning. A single fact suffices to give an idea of the internal splendour of the church: the pavement is formed of agates brought from Greece.

Near the New or Great Palace, and close to these churches, is a strange building in no known style of architecture, Asiatic and Tartaric in appearance, which is among the lay buildings what Vassily Blajenny is to the religious buildings, — a fully realised fancy of sumptuous, barbaric, and fantastic imagination. It was built under Ivan III, by the architect Aleviso. On its roof spring in graceful and picturesque irregularity the gold-topped turrets of the chapels and oratories it contains. An outer staircase, from the top of which the Emperor shows himself to the people after his coronation, leads up to it, its ornamental projection forming an original architectural feature. It is as well known in Moscow

as the Giants' Staircase in Venice; it is one of the curiosities of the Kremlin, and is called in Russian Krasnoe Kriltso, or the Red Staircase.

The interior of the palace, the residence of the ancient Czars, is almost indescribable; the rooms and passages seem to have been cut out one after another, without following a settled plan, from some huge block of stone, so curious, complicated, and bewildering is the maze they form; the level and the direction changing in accordance with the caprices of a crazy fancy. One walks through it as in a dream, sometimes stopped by a grated gate that opens mysteriously, sometimes forced to pass along a narrow, dark passage, the walls of which one almost brushes on either side; or again, there is no other way than the dentellated edge of the cornice, from which one sees the copper plates of the roof and the bulbs of the belfries; ascending, descending, utterly bewildered, seeing here and there through golden gratings the gleam of lamps flashing upon the gilded Ikonostas, and reaching after this long trip in the interior, a hall amazingly ornamented with barbaric richness, at the end of which one is surprised not to see the great Khan of Tartary seated cross-legged upon his black felt carpet.

Such is for instance the hall called the Golden Chamber, which occupies the whole interior of the Granovitaia Palata, or Facetted Palace, thus called no doubt on account of the facetting in diamond form of the stones of the façade. The gilded vaulted ceiling of this hall is supported by elliptical arches resting upon a central pillar; thick, gilded iron bars bind the arches one to another, and prevent their spreading. A few paintings here and there form dark spots against the ruddy splendour of the background. On the mouldings and arches run inscriptions in old Slavic letters, magnificent characters which lend themselves as readily to the ornamentation of buildings as does Cufic. It is not possible to imagine a richer, more mysterious, more sombre and yet more brilliant decoration, than that of the Golden Chamber: a Shakespearean Romanticist would love to make of it a setting for the last scene of a drama.

Some of the vaulted halls of the Old Palace are so low that a man of medium height can scarcely manage to stand upright in them. It was there that in an atmosphere overheated by the stoves, the women, squatting in Eastern fashion upon piles of carpets, spent the long hours of the Russian winter, watching,

through the narrow windows, the snow sparkling upon the gilded cupolas and the crows sweeping in vast spirals around the steeples.

These apartments, covered with paintings, the palm leaves, designs, and flowers of which resemble the patterns of Cashmere shawls, make one think of Asiatic harems transported into Northern climes; the real Muscovite taste, spoiled later on by unintelligent imitation of Western arts, here appears in all its primitive originality, and with all its strongly barbaric flavour. I have often noticed that the progress of civilisation seems to deprive nations of the feeling for architecture and ornament; the old buildings of the Kremlin prove once again how true is this assertion, which may at first appear paradoxical. The decoration of these mysterious chambers has been directed by an inexhaustible fancy; gold, green, blue, red mingle with wondrous success and produce charming effects. This architecture, utterly careless of symmetrical combinations, rises like a mass of soap-bubbles which a child blows in a plate through a straw. Each cell joins the next one, turning to account its angles and its facets, and the whole mass is brilliant with the varied colours of the iris. This apparently puerile and eccentric com-

parison, nevertheless renders better than any other the way in which these fantastic though real palaces are clustered together.

I wish the New or Great Palace had been built in this style. It is an immense building in modern taste, which would be beautiful anywhere else, but which is out of place in the centre of the old Kremlin. Classical architecture, with its great cold lines, seems still more wearily solemn amid these strangely shaped, brightly coloured palaces, and the multitude of Eastern-looking churches that raise to heaven a gilded forest of cupolas, domes, pyramidions and bulbous steeples. On beholding this Muscovite architecture, one might readily believe one's self in some fanciful city of Asia; the cathedrals might be mosques, and the steeples minarets, but the sedate façade of the New Palace brings one back to the West and to civilisation, a painful thing to a Romanticist barbarian like myself.

The palace is entered by a monumental staircase closed at its upper part by magnificent gates of polished iron, which are opened to give passage to the visitors. Then one enters under the high vaulting of the domed hall, in which are placed sentries that are never relieved; they are four manikins, dressed from top to toe in

curious, antique Slavonic armour. These knights have a splendid port. They are so life-like that the mistake is easily pardoned; one might easily imagine that their hearts are beating under their coats of mail. Mediæval armours thus placed upright almost make me shiver involuntarily, so faithfully do they preserve the outer form of man, which has vanished forever.

From this rotunda start two galleries containing inestimable riches. The treasury of Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, the wells of Abul-Kassim, the Grüne-Gewälbe at Dresden, would not together present such a multitude of marvels, the material value of which is enhanced by their historical worth. Here sparkle, shine, and cast prismatic flashes and capricious gleams, diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, all the precious gems which miserly Nature conceals within her mines, and which are here lavished as if they were mere glass. They constellate crowns, they light up the ends of sceptres, they roll in sparkling rain upon the insignia of empire, they form arabesques and monograms, under which one can hardly perceive the golden setting. The eye is dazzled and the mind scarce ventures to calculate the sums of money represented by these splendours. It would be folly to attempt to describe this mighty jewel-casket, —

a whole volume would be insufficient. I must be satisfied with mentioning some of the most remarkable objects. One of the most ancient crowns is that of Vladimir Monomachus; it was the gift of Emperor Alexis Comnenius, and was brought from Constantinople to Kiev by a Greek Embassy, in 1116. Apart from its historical associations, it is a piece of work in exquisite taste. On a ground of gold filigree are incrusted pearls and precious stones, arranged with a wonderful knowledge of ornamentation. The crowns of Kazan and Astrakhan, in Oriental taste, the one covered with turquoises, the other surmounted by a huge, uncut emerald, are jewels which would drive modern goldsmiths to despair. The crown of Siberia is of gold cloth, and, like all the others, bears on top the Greek cross; and like all the others is starred with diamonds, sapphires, and pearls. The golden sceptre of Vladimir Monomachus, nearly one metre in length, contains no less than two hundred and sixty-eight diamonds, three hundred and sixty rubies, and fifteen emeralds. The enamels which cover the places left free by the gems represent devotional subjects treated in Byzantine style. This sceptre and a reliquary in the form of a cross, which contains a fragment of the

stone of our Lord's tomb and a piece of the True Cross are also presents from Emperor Alexis Comnenius. This treasure is enclosed in a golden casket, fairly covered with gems. A curious gem is the chain of the first of the Romanoffs, on each link of which is engraved a prayer and one of the Czar's titles; there are ninety-nine links. I cannot speak of all the thrones, orbs, sceptres, and crowns of the different reigns, but I may say that if the richness is ever the same, the purity of taste and the beauty of workmanship diminish in proportion as one draws closer to modern times.

A no less marvellous thing, but more easily described, is the hall containing the gold and silver plate. Around the pillars rise circular credences in the form of dressers, which support a whole world of vases, pots, ewers, flagons, beer glasses, tankards, bowls, jugs, ladles, pipkins, cups, mugs, cans, pottles, goblets, beakers, pints, stoups, gourds, amphoræ, and whatever relates to lush, as Rabelais used to say in his Pantagruelic tongue. Behind these shine vessels of gold and silver-gilt, as large as those in which Victor Hugo's Burgraves had whole oxen served up. Every pot has its own nimbus, and what pots they are!

Some are no less than three or four feet in height, and could be lifted by a Titan only. Imagine the expenditure of imagination in this variety of plate! Every shape capable of containing drink, wine, hydromel, beer, kwass, brandy, seem to have been made use of. The ornamentation of these gold and silver or silver-gilt vases is in the richest, most fantastic and most grotesque taste; sometimes bacchanals with chubby, jolly figures dancing around the paunch of a pot; sometimes foliage with animals and hunts; sometimes dragons writhing around the handles, or antique medals set within the sides of a beaker; a Roman triumph passing by with its trumpets and ensigns; Hebrews in Dutch costume carrying the grapes from the Promised Land; a mythological feminine nude figure, contemplated by satyrs through dense arabesques. According to the artist's fancy the vases assume bestial forms, take the shape of heavy bears, or slender storks, or winged eagles, or ducks with swelling breasts, or stags with antlers thrown back. A dish for comfits is made in the shape of a ship, with swelling sails and flying flags, and is full of spices up to the hatch-way. Every possible fancy of goldsmith-work is carried out on this wondrous sideboard.

The Hall of Armour contains treasures which would tire out the pen of the most intrepid catalogue-maker. Circassian helmets, coats of mail, adorned with verses of the Koran, bucklers with filigree bosses, scimitars, kandjars with jade handles, sheaths rich with precious stones, all the weapons of the East, which are at the same time gems, blaze amid the more severe arsenal of the West. On seeing all this accumulated wealth one's brain gives way and one begs for mercy of the too complacent or too conscientious guide, who will not spare you a single object.

I like very much the Chapter Rooms of the various orders of knighthood, the orders of St. George, St. Alexander, St. Andrew, St. Catherine, which occupy a vast gallery, the motive of ornamentation of which is drawn from the quarterings of their coats of arms. Heraldic art is eminently decorative, and when applied to buildings always produces a good effect.

The sumptuousness of the furniture of the state apartments can readily be imagined without my entering into details. Everything modern luxury could produce in the way of splendour is collected here at great expense, and nothing recalls the charming Muscovite taste; but the style adopted was rendered neces-

sary by that of the palace. What greatly surprised me was to find myself at the end of the last room face to face with a pale phantom of white marble, in the costume of an apotheosis, which fixed upon me its great motionless eyes, and bent with a meditative air its Roman Cæsar's face: I certainly had not expected to find Napoleon in Moscow in the palace of the Czars.

TROÏTZA

THERE is one excursion which is certain to be suggested, and which should be made when one has a few days of leisure, after having seen the chief sights : it is a visit to the Troïtza Convent. The trip is worth the trouble, and no one ever regrets having taken it. So it was agreed I should go to Troïtza, and the Russian friend who had so kindly undertaken to show me about, took charge of the preparations. He ordered a kibitka and sent on a relay of horses, which we were to find half-way, for by making an early start the trip may be made in half a day, and Troïtza be reached early enough to enable one to get a general idea of the buildings and the site. I was strictly charged to be ready at three o'clock in the morning.

I was up and ready when the kibitka stopped before the inn door. On trying to see what kind of weather it was I noticed that the thermometer inside the house marked sixty-six degrees, while the thermometer out-

side showed over twenty-five below zero. The kibitka was waiting for us and the impatient horses tossed their heads, shaking their long manes and chewing the snow. A kibitka is a sort of box as much like a hut as a carriage and placed upon a sleigh. It has a door and a window, which must not be shut, for the breath of the passengers freezing upon the pane would turn to ice, and thus one would be deprived of air and plunged in a white darkness.

We settled ourselves as well as we could in the kibitka, packed like sardines; for although there were only three of us, the numerous garments we had put on caused us to take up as much room as six people. In addition, by way of further precaution, travelling-blankets and a bear-skin robe were thrown over us; and then we were off. It was about four o'clock in the morning. In the sky, which was of a blue black, the stars twinkled brilliantly with that bright light that denotes intense cold. The snow creaked under the steel runners of the kibitka like a pane of glass scratched by a diamond. There was not a breath of wind, and it seemed as though the wind itself were frozen. I could have gone about with a lighted candle in the hand without the flame flickering. The wind

increases enormously the rigour of the temperature; it turns inert cold into active cold, and icicles into arrow-heads. In a word, it was what might be called fine weather for Moscow, at the end of January.

Russian coachmen like to drive fast, — a fancy shared by their horses, which have to be restrained rather than excited; they always start at full speed, and until one is accustomed to the tremendous pace one fancies the horses have bolted. Our own steeds carefully observed this law, and galloped madly through the solitary and silent streets of Moscow, faintly lighted by the reflections of the snow, which recalls the dying gleams of frozen lamps. The sombre silhouettes of the houses, buildings, and churches, with quaint sky-lines and relieved by white touches, — for no obscurity quite dims the silvery brilliancy of the snow, — flashed rapidly to right and left. Sometimes the domes of chapels of which we got glimpses, looked like giant helmets overtopping the ramparts of some fanciful fortress. The silence was broken only by the watchmen walking with regular steps, and dragging their iron-shod sticks upon the pavements, in proof of their vigilance.

At the rate at which we were going we soon left the city, although it is very large; roads took the place of

streets; houses disappeared, and on either side the country showed faintly white under the night sky. It is a curious sensation to be flying fast through a pallid, indefinite landscape, enshrouded in monotonous whiteness, which resembles the plains of the moon, while men and animals are asleep, and with no other sound than the galloping of the horses and the creaking of the sleigh-runners over the snow. We might have fancied ourselves upon an uninhabited globe.

The night had been starry, but towards morning vapours ascended from the horizon, and the Muscovite dawn showed pale and with sunken eyes in the dim light; perhaps its nose was red, but the epithet "rosy-fingered" which Homer applies to the Greek Aurora, did not suit it. However, the light it gave was sufficient to show in all its extent the gloomy but rather grand landscape which unrolled before us.

My readers may perhaps think that my descriptions are all alike, but monotony is one of the characteristic traits of a Russian landscape, at least in the country we were traversing. It consists of vast plains with slight elevations, and no other hills than the low hillocks on which are built the Kremlin of Moscow and the Kremlin of Nijni-Novgorod, which are no higher than

Montmartre. The snow, which during four or five months of the year covers these flat countries, adds to the uniformity of their aspect by filling up the paths, the beds of the streams, and the valleys which these have hollowed out. All one sees for hundreds of miles is an endless white surface, slightly broken here and there by the inequalities of the ground, and, according to the position of the sun, sometimes enlivened with rosy lights and bluish shadows; but when the heavens wear their usual leaden-gray livery, the general tone is a mat white or rather a dead white. At various distances, more or less close, lines of reddish brush, half emerging from the snow, break the vast extent of white; scattered birch and pine woods here and there make a dark spot, and poles like telegraph poles mark the road from place to place, for it is often effaced by drifts. Near the road, isbas, built of round logs, the chinks filled up with moss, the roofs, the poles of which cross and form a sort of X on the summit, align their sharp gables, and on the edge of the horizon the low silhouettes of the villages, surmounted by a church with bulbous steeples, stand out. There is no life save a few flights of crows or ravens, and sometimes a moujik on his sleigh, drawn by little horses with long manes

and tails, carrying wood or other goods to a dwelling farther inland. Such is the landscape, which is reproduced incessantly, and which re-forms around you as you proceed, just as the horizon of the sea is constantly re-forming and constantly the same around a ship. Although picturesque incidents are very rare, one does not weary of looking at the vast space which fills one with an indefinable melancholy, as does whatever is great, silent, and solitary. Sometimes in spite of the speed of the horses one might fancy one's self at a standstill.

We reached the relay house, which was built of wood, the yard filled with telegas and mean-looking sleighs. In a low room moujiks in tulupes shining with grease, with blond beards and red faces lighted by eyes of a polar blue, were grouped around a copper urn and drinking tea; while others were asleep on benches near the stove, — a few felt more chilly and were lying upon it.

We were shown into an upper room, ceiled and wainscotted so that it looked like a pine box seen from inside. It was lighted by a small window, with double sashes; and for sole ornament had a picture of the Mother of God, of which the nimbus and the garments

were of stamped metal, cut out for the head and the hands, and showing the brown carnation flesh-tint which the Russians have imitated from the Byzantine school, and which gives an antique look to very recent paintings. The Child Jesus was treated in the same manner. A lamp was burning before the holy image. These figures mysteriously tanned, which one catches sight of through the holes of the gold or silver carapace, have a good deal of character and command veneration, more than pictures, preferable from an artistic point of view, would do. There is no hut so poor but that it possesses one of these images, which the dwellers in the building never pass without uncovering and frequently worshipping them.

The furniture of the room consisted of a table and a few stools, and the pleasant hot-house atmosphere made it comfortable. I threw off the pelisses and heavy garments which weighed me down, and, thanks to the provisions we had brought from Moscow, we had an excellent breakfast, washed down with caravan tea, drawn in the samovar of the inn. Then again putting on our heavy armour to protect us from the darts of winter, we settled ourselves once more in the kibitka, ready to brave gaily the rigours of the Pole.

TROÏTZA

On approaching Troïtza the houses become more numerous, and you feel you are coming to an important place: Troïtza is indeed the centre of many pilgrimages; people resort to it from all the provinces of the Empire, for St. Sergius, the founder of this famous convent, is one of the most venerated saints in the Greek calendar. The road that leads from Moscow to Troïtza, and which we followed, is that of Yaroslav, and in summer is said to be much travelled; we passed through Ostentina, where is a Tartar camp, through the village of Rostopkine, through Alexevikoi, where up to a few years ago were to be seen the ruins of the castle of Czar Alexis; and when the country is not covered with a mantle of snow there are to be seen a number of pretty summer houses. The pilgrims, wearing their armiaks and shoes made of the bark of the lime tree, when they do not walk barefoot through devotion, follow the sandy road by short stages. Families follow in kibitkas, bringing with them mattresses, pillows, kitchen utensils and the indispensable samovar, just like travelling tribes. But at the time of my excursion the road was absolutely deserted. Before reaching Troïtza the ground sinks somewhat, gullied

no doubt by some stream frozen in winter and covered with snow. On the other slope of the ravine, upon a broad plateau, rises picturesquely the fortress-looking convent of St. Sergius. It forms a vast square, surrounded by solid ramparts, upon which runs a covered gallery, pierced with barbicans, which shelters the defenders of the place; for the convent may well be so called, having been attacked several times. Great towers, some square, others hexagonal, rise at the corners and flank the walls at various points. Some of these towers have on their summits a band of battlements, projecting boldly, on which rise roofs that swell curiously, and that are surmounted by lanterns ending in spikes. Others bear a second tower, narrower than the first, and springing above it from a balustrade of belfries. The gate by which the convent is entered is cut in a square tower, in front of which stretches a vast square.

Above the ramparts show, with graceful and picturesque regularity, the roofs of the curious buildings which the monastery contains; a vast refectory hall, the walls of which are quadrilled and painted to resemble boss-work, facetted like diamonds, strikes the

eye by its imposing mass, which the belfry of the elegant chapel lightens up. Close by swell the five bulbous domes of the Church of the Assumption, surmounted by the Greek cross. A little farther, overtopping the sky line, the high, multicoloured steeple of the Church of the Trinity upraises its stories of turrets and carries away up into the heavens its cross adorned with chains. Other towers, belfries, and roofs are confusedly seen above the walls, but I cannot give them a definite position by description; nothing will answer but a sight of the place itself. Charming indeed are these gilded spires and cupolas, to which the snow adds a few touches of silver as they spring from the mass of edifices built in brilliant colours. They give the impression of an Oriental city.

On the other side of the square is a vast hostelry intended to receive pilgrims and travellers; it resembles a caravansary rather than an inn. Our carriage was put up there and before visiting the monastery we selected our rooms and ordered dinner. The place was not the equal of the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, or of the Hôtel Meurice, but after all it was fairly comfortable, — for the place; the temperature within was

spring-like, and the pantry seemed well stocked. The wails uttered by tourists about the filth and vermin in Russian inns surprise me.

Near the convent gate were stalls covered with small goods and curiosities, such as tourists like to carry away as souvenirs: children's toys of most primitive simplicity, coloured in an amusingly barbarous manner; Chinese white felt shoes, trimmed with rose or blue, which an Andalusian woman could scarcely put on; furred mittens; Circassian belts; Toula forks and spoons inlaid with platinum; reproductions of the great bell of Moscow; chaplets; enamelled Madonnas, with the effigy of St. Sergius; crosses of metal or wood, containing a multitude of microscopic figures in Byzantine style, mingled with inscriptions in Slavic characters; loaves of bread baked in the convent, with scenes from the Old and New Testaments stamped upon the crust; and heaps of green apples, which the Russians appear to be particularly fond of. A few moujiks, purple with cold, looked after these little shops, for here women, though they are not subjected to seclusion as in the East, scarce mingle with outer life; they are rarely met with in the streets; trade is carried on by men, and a sales-woman is an almost

unknown person in Russia. This is a survival of the old Asiatic modesty.

On the entrance gate are painted several passages from the life of St. Sergius, the great local saint. Like St. Roche and St. Anthony, St. Sergius has his favourite animal. It is neither a dog nor a pig, but a bear, a wild beast admirably fitted to figure in the legend of the Russian saint. When the venerable hermit lived in solitude, a bear used to wander around his hermitage, with evidently hostile intentions; one morning on opening his door the saint found the bear standing up and growling, its paws outstretched as if for an embrace, which was intended to be anything but brotherly. Sergius raised his hand and blessed the animal, which fell on all fours, licked his feet, and thenceforth followed him as docilely as the most submissive dog: the saint and the bear got along together thereafter most admirably.

After having cast a glance at these paintings, which, if they are not ancient, are at least restored from an antique and sufficiently Byzantine model, we entered the interior of the convent, which is very like the interior of a fortress, and is indeed one, for Troïtza has been besieged several times.

A brief historical summary of Troïtza may be desirable before passing to the description of the monuments and riches contained within its ramparts. St. Sergius lived in a hut in the centre of a vast forest pertaining to Radoneje, now Gorodok, devoting himself to prayer, fasting, and every austerity of a hermit's existence. Near his cabin he built a church in honour of the Holy Trinity, and thus created a religious centre to which the faithful were attracted. Fervent disciples desired to remain with the Master; in order to lodge them Sergius built a convent which received the name of Troïtza, which, in Russian, means Trinity, and he was elected Father Superior. This took place in 1340.

The thought of his own salvation and of heavenly things did not prevent St. Sergius taking an interest in contemporary events; the love of God in him had not extinguished the love of country; he was a patriotic saint, and as such is still the object of great veneration among the Russians. He it was who at the time of the great Mongol invasion, induced Prince Dimitri to march into the plains of the Don, against Mamaï's ferocious hordes. In order that religious excitement should be added to heroic inspiration, two

monks named by Sergius accompanied the prince to battle; the enemy was repelled, and Dimitri out of gratitude richly endowed the convent of Troïtza, an example followed by princes and czars, among these Ivan the Terrible, who was one of the most generous benefactors of the monastery. In 1393 the Tartars attacked Moscow, and ravaged the country around it after the Asiatic manner. Troïtza was already too rich a prey not to excite their covetousness, so the convent was attacked, pillaged, burned and reduced to a heap of ruins. When Nikon, once the devastating torrent had spent itself, returned to rebuild the monastery, and to bring back to it the scattered monks, he found under the débris, the miraculously preserved body of St. Sergius.

Troïtza in times of invasion and troubles served as an asylum to patriotism, and as a citadel to the nation. The Russians in 1609 defended it for sixteen months against the Poles led by the Hetman Sapieha and Lissovski. After several fruitless assaults the enemy was obliged to raise the siege. Later on, the convent of St. Sergius sheltered the young Czar Peter Alexievitch, who was fleeing from the revolt of the Strelitzes or, to speak more correctly, Streltzys, and the gratitude

of this illustrious personage, once he obtained power, enriched and transformed it into a tabernacle of treasures. Since the sixteenth century Troïtza has not been pillaged, and the convent would have offered magnificent spoils to the French army if it had pushed on so far, and if the burning of Moscow had not compelled Napoleon to retreat. Czars, princes, boyars (nobles), through pure ostentation or in the hope of obtaining the pardon of Heaven, have endowed Troïtza with incalculable wealth, which it still retains. The sceptical Potemkin, who was none the less very devout as regards St. Sergius, presented it with sumptuous ecclesiastical vestments. Besides these quantities of wealth Troïtza owned one hundred thousand peasants and vast domains, which Catherine II. secularised after having indemnified the monastery by rich presents. Formerly Troïtza held within its cells some three hundred monks; nowadays there are not more than one hundred, who scarcely fill the vast solitude of the immense convent.

The precincts of Troïtza, which is almost a town, contain nine churches, or cathedrals, as they are called in Russia, the Czar's palace, the residence of the Archimandrite, a Chapter house, a refectory, a library,

a treasury, the cells of the brethren, mortuary chapels, and offices of all kinds; symmetry was not observed, and the buildings arose, when needed, on the spot where they were wanted, as plants grow in good ground. The aspect of the place is strange, novel, foreign, and in no wise resembles the picturesqueness of Catholic convents. The melancholy of Gothic art, with its slender pillars, its pointed arches, its traceried trefoils, its heavenward spring, inspires a very different order of ideas. Here are long cloisters enclosing with their weather-worn arches a solitary green; no austere, moss-covered, rain-washed old walls, to which cling the smoke and rust of time; no architecture of endless fancifulness, varying the main theme, and turning the expected into the unexpected. The Greek religion, which from the point of view of art is less picturesque, preserves the old Byzantine formulæ and fearlessly repeats itself, caring more for orthodoxy than taste. It nevertheless obtains powerful effects of splendour and richness, and its hieratic barbarity impresses deeply the simple minded people. It is impossible for the most blasé tourist not to feel admiration as well as astonishment when he perceives at the end of an avenue of trees brilliant with frost, that opens before

him as he issues from the tower gate, the churches painted blue, bright red, apple green, outlined in white by the snow, and rising quaintly with their golden or silver cupolas amid the polychrome buildings that surround them.

The day was waning when I entered the Troïtsky Sobor or Cathedral of the Trinity, in which is the shrine of St. Sergius. Mysterious shadows heightened the magnificence of the sanctuary. On the walls long rows of saints formed dark spots against the golden backgrounds, and lived with a sort of strange, grim life; they looked like processions of serious personages standing out dark on top of a hill against the setting sun. In other more obscure corners, the painted figures were like phantoms watching with their shadowy glances what was going on in the church; touched by some stray beam here and there an aureole shone like a star in the dark heavens, or gave to the head of a bearded saint the look of the head of St. John the Baptist on the dish of Herodias. The Ikonostas, a gigantic façade of gold and gems, rose to the roof with tawny gleams and prismatic scintillations. Near the Ikonostas, on the right, a luminous focus drew the eye. Numerous lamps cast in that part

gleams of gold, silver-gilt and silver. This was the shrine of St. Sergius, the humble hermit, who rests there in a monument richer than that of any emperor. The tomb is of silver-gilt, and the baldachin of massive silver, supported by four pillars of the same metal, presented by the Czarina Anna.

Around this mass of goldsmith-work, shimmering with light, moujiks, pilgrims, devotees of all kinds, lost in admiring ecstasy, were praying, making signs of the cross, and following out the practices of the Russian devotion. It formed a picture worthy of Rembrandt. The dazzling tomb splashed the kneeling peasants with flaming light, that caused a head to shine, a beard to sparkle, a profile to stand out; while the lower part of the body remained bathed in shadow, and was lost under the coarse thick garments. There were among them superb heads, illumined by fervour and belief.

After having contemplated this most interesting spectacle, I examined the Ikonostas, wherein is set the portrait of St. Sergius, which is said to be miraculous, and which was carried first by Czar Alexis in his wars against the Poles, and next by Czar Peter the Great in his campaigns against Charles XII. It is impossible to imagine what a wealth of richness, faith,

devotion, or remorse hoping to gain the indulgence of Heaven, — have accumulated for centuries past upon this Ikonostas, which is a colossal jewel-case, a perfect mine of gems. The aureoles of the figures are covered with diamonds; sapphires, rubies, emeralds and topazes form mosaics upon the golden robes of the Madonna; the features are drawn in white and black pearls, and when room is lacking carcanets of massive gold, fixed at the two ends like the handles of drawers, are used for the setting of huge diamonds. I dare not calculate the worth of them; unquestionably it is many millions. No doubt a simple Madonna by Raphael is more beautiful than the Greek Mother of God thus adorned, yet that prodigious, Asiatic, and Byzantine magnificence is effective in its way.

The Ouspensky Cathedral or Cathedral of the Assumption, which is near that of the Trinity, is built on the same plan as the Ouspensky Cathedral in the Kremlin, the exterior plan of which is here repeated. The walls and the huge pillars which upbear the vaulting are covered with paintings that might be attributed to the personal pupils of Panselinos, the great Byzantine artist of the eleventh century. The whole church looks as if it were hung with tapestries, for no relief

breaks the immense fresco, divided into zones and compartments. Sculpture has no part in the ornamentation of religious buildings devoted to Greek worship; the Eastern Church, which makes such profuse use of the painted image, appears not to admit the carved image, and to fear a statue as if it were an idol, although *bassi-relievi* are occasionally employed in the decoration of doors, as well as of crosses and other utensils of worship. I know of no detached statues in the round save those which adorn St. Isaac's. This absence of relief-work and of sculpture gives to Greek churches a strange and peculiar aspect which one does not quite grasp at first, but which is understood later on.

In this church are the tombs of Czar Boris Godunoff, his wife, and his two children. These tombs resemble, as far as style and form go, Mussulman turbehs; religious scruple has banished the art which makes Gothic tombs such admirable monuments.

St. Sergius, the founder and patron of the convent, fully deserved to have his church on the site where formerly arose his hermitage; so that there is in Troïtza a chapel of St. Sergius, as richly ornamented as the sanctuaries of which I have just spoken. Here

is found the miraculous image of the Virgin of Smolensko, called "the Guide." The walls are covered with frescoes from top to bottom, and the Ikonostas allows the brown heads of the Greek saints to be seen through the open portions of its stamped goldwork.

Meanwhile night had fallen, and however zealous he may be, a tourist cannot carry on his trade in the dark; besides, hunger began to torment me, and I returned to the inn, where the soft temperature of Russian interiors awaited me. The dinner was fairly good. The inevitable cabbage soup with balls of forced meat, sucking-pigs, soudak, a fish peculiar to Russia like the sturgeon, formed the menu, and were washed down with a cheap, white Crimean wine, a sort of "epileptic coco," which amuses itself trying to imitate champagne, and yet, taking it all round, not unpleasant to drink. After dinner a few glasses of tea, and a few puffs of Russian tobacco, exceedingly strong, which is smoked in small pipes like those of the Chinese, — occupied me until bed time.

The next day early I continued my tourist work on the convent of Troïtza, and finished visiting the churches which I had been unable to see the day before, and which it is needless to describe in detail, for

internally they are, with a very few exceptions, mere repetitions like liturgical formulæ. On the exterior of some of the churches the rococo style mingles in the quaintest manner with the Byzantine style; besides, it is difficult to ascertain the real age of these edifices; what seems ancient may have been painted but the night before, and the traces and action of time vanish under successive coats of colour, which are constantly renewed.

I had a letter from an influential personage in Moscow for the Archimandrite, a handsome man with a long beard and long hair, of most majestic face, whose features recalled those of the human-headed Ninevite bulls. The Archimandrite did not know French, and sent for a nun who understood the language and told her in Russian to accompany me on my visit to the Treasury and other curiosities of the convent. The nun, on arriving, kissed the Archimandrite's hand, and stood silently before him until the keeper had brought the keys. Her face was one of those it is impossible to forget, and which emerge from the commonplaces of life like a dream. She wore a sort of bushel measure, like the diadem of certain Mithriac divinities, and such as is worn by popes and monks; long crêpe

lapels fell down on either side upon the full black dress, of the same kind of stuff of which barristers' gowns are made; her face, ascetically pale, with waxy yellow tones under the delicate skin, was perfectly regular. Her eyes circled by a broad, brown, heavy line, exhibited, when she raised them, pupils of a strange blue, and her whole person, though buried and as it were lost within her floating gown of black tamine, betrayed the highest breeding. She drew the folds of her dress behind her along the endless corridors of the convent, with the same air as she would have worn a court dress at some great ceremony. The charms of the former woman of the world, which she tried to dissimulate through Christian humility, returned in spite of herself. On seeing her the most prosaic imagination could not help weaving a story: what sorrow, what despair, what catastrophe of love could have brought her here? She made me think of the Duchess of Langeais in Balzac's "History of the Thirteen," whom Montriveau found within the Andalusian convent, wearing the Carmelite dress.

We reached the Treasury, where I was shown as the most precious objects a wooden goblet and a few coarse sacerdotal vestments. The nun explained to us

that the mean, wooden vase was the ciborium which St. Sergius used in celebrating mass, and that he had worn these chasubles of poor stuff, — thus transforming them into priceless relics. She spoke the purest French without any accent, and as if it were her mother tongue. While she was telling me some marvellous legend connected with these things, in the most collected manner, and yet without scepticism or credulity, a faint smile flitted over her lips, and revealed teeth whiter than all the pearls in the treasury, brilliant teeth that left an unforgettable memory like Berenice's teeth in Edgar Allan Poe's tale. These luminous teeth in that face worn by grief and austerity, brought back her youth: the nun who at first had appeared to be about thirty-six or thirty-eight, now seemed to be only twenty-five; but it was merely a flash; having felt with feminine delicacy my respectful but deep admiration, she resumed the dead look that became her habit.

Every cupboard was opened and I was enabled to see the Bibles, Gospels and liturgies, in silver-gilt bindings, encrusted with precious stones, onyx, sardonyx, agate, chrysoberyl, aqua-marine, lapis-lazuli, malachite, turquoise, with gilded silver clasps, and

antique cameos set on the covers; golden ciboriums ringed with diamonds; crosses studded with emeralds, and rubies; rings set with sapphires; vases and candlesticks of silver; brocaded dalmatics embroidered with flowers, gems, and inscriptions in old Slavic characters, formed of pearls; perfume-burners in *cloisonné* enamels; triptychs adorned with numberless figures; images of Madonnas and saints, perfect blocks of goldsmith-work, constellated with rough gems, — in a word a treasure house of Haroun-al-Raschid Christianised. As we were leaving, dazzled by these wonders, my eyes fluttering and filled with flashes, the nun made me notice, upon the shelf of a cupboard, a row of bushel measures which had escaped my notice and which did not appear to be particularly striking. She plunged her long, delicate, aristocratic hand into it and said: "These are pearls; we did not know what to do with them, and put them there; there are *eight bushels* of them."

BYZANTINE ART

HAVING gathered from some of my remarks that I was not a stranger to art, it occurred to the nun who had shown me the Treasury, that an inspection of the studios in the convent might interest me as much as these heaps of gold, diamonds, and pearls, and she therefore led me by broad passages, broken by stairs, to the great rooms in which worked the painter-monks and their pupils.

The conditions of Byzantine art are very peculiar. It does not resemble in the least what is meant by art among the nations of Western Europe or those which belong to the Latin church. It is a hieratic, sacerdotal, unchanging art; little or nothing is left to the fancy or the invention of the artist: its formulæ are as strict as dogmas. Therefore in its school there is neither progress nor decadence nor epoch. A fresco or a painting finished a score of years ago, cannot be told from a painting which is hundreds of years old; as Byzantine art was in the sixth, ninth, or tenth cen-

turies, so it is to-day. I use the term Byzantine art for lack of a more accurate expression, just as one uses the word Gothic, which is understood by everybody, although it does not convey a strictly accurate meaning. It is plain to any man who has a knowledge of painting that Byzantine art flows from a different source than Latin art, that it has borrowed nothing from the Italian schools, that the Renaissance does not exist for it, and that Rome was not the metropolis of its ideal; it lives on itself without borrowing, without improving, for at the very outset it found its own proper form, which may be criticised from an artistic point of view, but which is marvellously adapted to its purpose.

But, it will naturally be asked: Where is the centre of this carefully kept up tradition? Whence comes that uniform teaching which has come down through ages and has undergone no change in the various *milieux* it has traversed? Who were the masters obeyed by all these unknown artists, whose brush has covered the churches of the Greek ritual with such a multitude of figures that if it were possible to number them they would surpass in numbers the mightiest army?

An interesting and learned introduction by M. Didron, prefixed to the Byzantine manuscript "The Guide to Painting," translated by Dr. Paul Durand, answers most of the questions I have just asked. The author of this "Guide to Painting" is one Dionysius, a monk of Fourna of Agrapha, a great admirer of the celebrated Manuel Panselinos of Thessalonica, who appears to be the Raphael of Byzantine art, and some of whose frescoes still exist in the chief church of Kares, on Mount Athos. In a short preface, preceded by an invocation "To Mary, Mother of God and Ever Virgin," Master Dionysius thus states the object of his book: "I have sought to propagate the art of painting, — which in the days of my childhood I had so much trouble in learning in Thessalonica, — for the use of those who also wish to practise it, and to explain to them in this work with the greatest accuracy every measurement, the characters of the figures and the colours to be used for flesh and ornaments. I have further wished to explain the extent to which Nature is to be imitated; the kind of work for each subject; the various preparations of varnish, glue, plaster, and gold, and the mode of painting upon walls in the most perfect manner possible. I have also indicated the whole

series of the Old and New Testaments, the manner of representing the natural facts, the miracles in the Bible, and at the same time the parables of our Lord, the inscriptions and the epigraphs which are suitable to each Prophet; the name and the character of the face of the Apostles and the chief saints, their martyrdom and a portion of their miracles according to the order of the calendar. I have stated the manner of painting churches and given other information necessary to the order of painting, as may be seen in the table of contents. I have corrected all these materials with much pains and care, assisted by my pupil, Master Cyril of Chios, who collected the whole with great attention. Therefore pray for us all of you, that the Lord may deliver us from the fear of being condemned as wicked servants."

This manuscript, a perfect manual of Christian iconography and of pictorial technique, goes back, according to the monks of Mount Athos, to the tenth century, but it is not so old and is probably of the fifteenth century at the most; but the fact is of little importance, for the book unquestionably repeats ancient formulæ and archaic processes. Even now it serves as a guide. M. Didron, in an account of his trip to the sacred mount, where he visited Father Macarios, the

best devotional painter next to father Joasaph, says: "This bible of art stood open in the centre of the studio, and two of the youngest pupils alternately read from it aloud, while the others were busy painting as they listened to the reading."

M. Didron wished to buy the manuscript, but the artist refused to part with it at any price, for without the book he could not continue painting; however, he allowed a copy to be made of it. The manuscript contained the secret of Byzantine painting, and enabled the learned tourist — who had just visited the churches of Athens, Salamis, Triccala, Kalabach, Larissa, those in the convent of Meteors, of St. Barlaam, St. Sophia of Salonica, Mistra, and Argos — to understand how it was that he met everywhere with the same profusion of painted decoration, the same composition, the same costumes, the same ages, the same attitudes of the sacred personages. "It is," he exclaims, "surprising in its uniformity; as if a single thought, animating a hundred brushes at one and the same time, caused to bloom suddenly all the paintings in Greece."

Even now one might utter such an exclamation with just as much reason in presence of the frescoes which adorn most Russian churches.

The workshop where these paintings are prepared, and where are trained the Byzantine artists, is at Mount Athos, which is really the Italy of the Eastern church. Mount Athos, a monkish province, contains twenty great monasteries, which form as many small towns, — ten villages, two hundred and fifty isolated cells, one hundred and fifty hermitages. The smallest monastery contains six churches or chapels, and the largest thirty-three, — altogether two hundred and eighty-eight. The villages or *skites* possess two hundred and twenty-five chapels, and ten churches; each cell has its own chapel, and each hermitage its own oratory. At Kares, the capital of Mount Athos, is seen what may be called the cathedral of the whole mountain, which the monks call the Protaton or Metropolis. At the top of the eastern peak which terminates the peninsula, rises the isolated church dedicated to the Metamorphosis or the Transfiguration. There are, then, on Mount Athos, nine hundred and thirty-five churches, chapels, and oratories. Nearly all are painted in fresco, and filled with paintings on panels. In the great convents most of the refectories are also covered with mural paintings.

This surely forms a rich museum of religious art. The pupil-painter has no lack of subjects for studies

and of models to reproduce, for in the Byzantine school an artist's merit does not consist, as it does in other schools, in inventing, imagining, exhibiting originality, but in reproducing in the most faithful manner the consecrated types ; the contours and the proportions of figures are settled, Nature is never consulted, tradition indicates the colour of the beard and the hair, whether they are long or short, the colour of the garments, the number of these, the direction and the thickness of the folds.

In the representations of saints in long robes, an invariable broken fold is always to be found above and below the knee. In Greece, says M. Didron, the artist is the slave of theology ; his work, which will be copied by his successors, is a copy of that of the paintings of his predecessors. The Greek artist is a slave to tradition as an animal is to instinct ; he draws a figure just as a swallow builds a nest or a bee a cell ; the execution alone is personal to him, for the invention and the thought are the share of the fathers, of the theologians, of the Orthodox Church. Greek art takes no account of time or place : in the eighteenth century the Morean painter continues and copies the Venetian painter of the tenth, and the Athenian painter

of the fifth or sixth. The "St. John Chrysostom" in the Baptistery of St. Mark at Venice, is met with again in the Metamorphosis of Athens, the Hecatompilæ at Mistra, and the Panagia of St. Luke.

M. Didron was fortunate enough to meet at Mount Athos, in the Esphigmenon Convent, the first which he entered, a Kares painter — the monk Joasaph, who was busy ornamenting with mural paintings the porch or narthex which leads into the nave of the church. He was assisted in his work by his brother, two pupils, one of whom was a deacon, and two apprentices. The subject which he was drawing upon the yet fresh coating applied to the wall, was Christ sending forth his apostles to preach the Gospels and to baptise all nations; an important subject, containing twelve figures almost life-size. He sketched the figures without making a mistake, in a firm hand, having for cartoon or model his memory only. While he was working the pupils filled up the contours of the figures and the draperies with the colours indicated, gilded haloes around the heads, or wrote the letters of inscriptions which the master dictated while carrying on his own work. The young apprentices ground and mixed the colours. These frescoes, says Didron, exe-

cuted with such rare rapidity, were better than the works of our painters of the second or third order in the religious style; and as he expressed surprise at the talent and knowledge of Father Joasaph, who found for each personage such an appropriate inscription, and supposed he was exceedingly erudite, — the monk replied that it was not so difficult as it seemed, and that with the help of the "Guide" and a little practice, any one could do as much.

I was now about to see at work, for myself, painter-monks like those of Mount Athos, devoutly following the teaching of the "Guide;" a living school of Byzantines; the past working by the hands of the present, assuredly a rare and interesting fact.

Five or six monks of various ages, were busy painting in a large, well-lighted room with bare walls; one of them a handsome man, with a black beard and swarthy face, who was finishing a Mother of God, struck me by his look of sacerdotal gravity and the pious air with which he wrought; he was evidently much more full of devotional than artistic feeling, and painted as if he were celebrating Mass. His Mother of God might have been placed upon the apostle's easel, so severely archaic was it, and so thoroughly

contained within the rigid and sacramental lines; the serious majesty of her great black staring eyes made her look like a Byzantine empress; the portions which were to be covered by a plate of silver or gold metal cut out to allow the head and hands to show, were as carefully painted as if they were to remain visible.

Other paintings, in a greater or less stage of advancement, representing the Greek saints, and among these St. Sergius, patron of the convent, — were being completed by the laborious hands of the monkish artists. These paintings, intended to serve as ikons in chapels or private dwellings, were upon panels covered with gypsum, in accordance with the process recommended by Master Dionysius of Agrapha; they were somewhat smoky, and in no wise different from the paintings of the fifteenth or the twelfth century. The poses were as stiff and constrained, the gestures as hieratic, the folds as regular, the colour the same identical tawny, brown flesh-tint; — in a word, they were wholly in accordance with the teaching of Mount Athos. The process employed was white of egg or distemper, which was afterwards varnished. The haloes and ornaments intended to be gilded were somewhat raised in order to catch the light better. Could

the old Salonica masters have returned to this world they would have been satisfied with their Troïtza pupils.

But nowadays no tradition can be faithfully maintained; among the obstinate adherents to the old formulæ, arise from time to time adepts less deeply conscientious; a new spirit manages to force its way into the old method by some fissure or another; even those who seek to follow the manner of the painters of Mount Athos and to preserve even in our age the unchanging Byzantine style, cannot help having seen modern paintings in which freedom of invention is joined to a study of Nature. It is difficult to keep one's eyes constantly closed, so that even in Troïtza the new influences had made themselves felt. In the metopes of the Parthenon, two styles are noticed, the one archaic and the other modern. A number of the monks conformed to the rule; a few of the younger men had abandoned the white of egg for oil, and while maintaining their figures in the prescribed attitude and copying the ancient model, they allowed themselves to give to the heads and to the hands truer tones and less conventional colour; to indulge in modelling and to seek for relief; they made the femi-

nine saints more humanly pretty, the male saints less theocratically Greek; they did not point on the chin of the patriarchs and the hermits the "junciform" beard recommended by the "Guide to Painting;" their work approached more closely to painting, without, in my opinion, possessing its merits.

This more suave and agreeable manner has a good many partisans, and examples of it are to be met with in several modern Russian churches. For myself I greatly prefer the old method, which is ideal, religious and decorative, and has the advantage of prestige, of forms and colours, outside of vulgar reality. That symbolical manner of presenting a thought by means of figures settled upon beforehand, like a sacred writing, the characters of which it is not permissible to change, — strikes me as wonderfully adapted to the ornamentation of sanctuaries. Even in its rigidity there is room for a great artist to make his mark by splendour of drawing, grandeur of style, and nobility of contours.

I doubt whether this attempt to humanise Byzantine art can prove successful. There is in Russia a school of Romanticist writers, full of enthusiasm like our own, for local colour, and it defends by learned theories and

intelligent criticism the old Mount Athos style on account of its antique and religious character, its deep conviction, and absolute originality, amid the productions of Italian, Spanish, or French art. A correct idea of this controversy may be obtained by recalling the passionate defence of Gothic architecture, the diatribes against Greek architecture as applied to religious buildings, and the parallels between Notre-Dame of Paris and the church of the Madeleine, which delighted the youth of 1830 to 1835. There is in every country an era of false classical civilisation, a sort of learned barbarism, when countries fail to understand their own beauty, to know their own character, when they repudiate their own antiquities and costumes, and are prepared to demolish, in seeking to attain an insipid idea of regularity, their most marvellous national edifices. Our own eighteenth century, in other respects so great, would willingly have razed cathedrals to the ground, as being monuments in bad taste. The portal of Saint-Gervais, by De Brosse, was in all sincerity preferred to the marvellous façades of the cathedrals of Strasbourg, Chartres, and Rheims.

The nun seemed to look upon these Madonnas with blooming colours, not exactly with disdain, for

after all they represented a sacred image, worthy of adoration, but with much less respectful admiration. She stood longer before the easels on which were being wrought out paintings in the old method. In spite of my preference for the older style, I am bound to confess that some amateurs carry rather far, in my opinion, the mania for old Byzantine paintings. By dint of seeking for the artless, the primeval, the sacred, the mysterious, they become enthusiastic for smoky and worm-eaten panels, on which are but faintly discerned grim faces extravagant in drawing and impossible in colour. By the side of such images the most barbaric Christs of Cimabue would look like paintings by Vanloo or Boucher. Some of these paintings go back, it is claimed, to the fifth and even to the fourth century. I can understand that they should be sought after as archaic curiosities, but I cannot see how they can be admired from an artistic point of view. I was shown a number of them during my trip through Russia, but I confess I did not find in them the beauties that so greatly delighted their owners. In a sanctuary they may be venerable by bearing testimony to an antique faith, but their place is not in a gallery, unless it is an historical one.

Outside of this Byzantine art, of which Mount Athos is the Rome, there is not yet any Russian art properly so called, and the few artists whom Russia has produced cannot form a school; they have studied in Italy, and their works have nothing particularly national. The most famous of all and the one best known in the West, is Brulof, whose vast painting called "The Last Day of Pompeii," made quite a sensation at the Salon in 1824. Brulof painted the cupola of St. Isaac's, a great apotheosis in which he manifests much knowledge of composition and perspective. It is in a style which somewhat recalls decorative painting as it was practised about the end of the eighteenth century. The artist, who had a fine, pale, romantic, Byronic face, with quantities of long, fair hair, took pleasure in reproducing his own face, and I have seen several portraits of himself, by him, painted at different periods, which represent him as more or less worn, but always handsome, with fatal beauty. These portraits, dashed off with free fancy, appear to be the best works of the artist. A very popular name in St. Petersburg is that of Ivanof, who during several years that he was busy working on a mysterious masterpiece, made Russia expect and hope for a great painter; but that is a

legend which I shall have to treat separately, for it would carry me too far from my subject. I do not mean to say that Russia will never take its place among schools of painting; I believe that it will manage to do so when it frees itself from the imitation of foreigners, and when its painters, instead of going to Italy to copy models, take the pains to look around them, and to inspire themselves by the nature of the varying characteristic types of the immense empire which begins on the confines of Prussia and ends on the borders of China.

Still preceded by the nun, enshrouded in her long black veil, I entered a laboratory, thoroughly equipped, in which Nadar would have felt perfectly at home. To pass from Mount Athos to the Boulevard des Capucines, is an uncommonly abrupt transition. To leave monks painting Panagias on golden backgrounds and to come immediately upon others coating glass plates with collodion, is the sort of trick which civilisation plays one at the most unexpected times. The sight of a cannon aimed at me would not have surprised me more than the brass lens which happened to be pointing in my direction. It was impossible to disbelieve the evidence of my senses. The monks of

Troïtza, the disciples of St. Sergius, were engaged in taking views of the convent and in making excellent prints from the negatives; they possess the best instruments, are acquainted with the latest methods, and manipulate their plates in a room the window of which is glazed with yellow glass — a non-actinic colour. I purchased a view of the monastery, which I still possess, and which has not faded much.

In his account of his voyage to Russia, de Custine complains of not having been allowed to visit the Troïtza library. I experienced no difficulty of this kind, and saw as much as a traveller generally sees of a library, in the course of half an hour: the backs of books handsomely bound and nicely arranged upon shelves in cases. Besides works on theology, Bibles, the works of the Fathers of the Church, treatises on scholastics, Evangels, liturgies in Greek, Latin, and Slavonic, I noticed, in the course of my rapid inspection, many French books of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. I also glanced at the vast refectory, which has at one of its ends, a very delicately worked iron grille, through the iron arabesques of which gleams the golden background of the Ikonostas, for the refectory runs into the chapel, in order that the soul may

be fed as well as the body. Our visit was over and the nun took me back to the Archimandrite, to take leave.

Before entering the room the habits of the woman of the world overcoming the rules of monastic life, she turned towards me and bowed slightly, as a queen might have done from the steps of her throne; and in a faint, languishing and gracious smile, shone like a white flash, her brilliant teeth, preferable to all the pearls of Troïtza. Then by a change as sudden as if she had drawn down her veil, she resumed her dead look, her spectral face of renunciation of the world, and with the steps of a phantom she knelt before the Archimandrite, whose hand she kissed piously, as if it were a paten or a relic. Thereafter, she arose and vanished like a dream within the mysterious depths of the convent, leaving in my memory the ineffaceable remembrance of her brief apparition.

There was nothing more to see at Troïtza, and I went back to the inn to order our driver to bring out the carriage. The horses having been harnessed to the kibitka by a lot of ropes, the driver seated upon a narrow seat covered with sheepskin, and we ourselves snuggling warmly under the bearskin, the bill paid,

the tips given, there was nothing left but to perform the usual fantasia of a start at full galop; a slight click of the moujik's tongue made our horses fly off like the mad steed that bore Mazeppa bound to its back, and it was only when we reached the other side of the slope, overlooked by Troïtza, the domes and towers of which were still visible, that the fine little horses condescended to come down to a reasonable gait.

THE MASKED BALL, THE THEATRES, THE MUSEUMS

BY evening I was back in Moscow, ready to go to a masked ball which was to take place that evening, and for which I found tickets awaiting me at the hotel. Before the door, in spite of the intense cold, stood sleighs and carriages the lamps of which shone like frozen stars. A warm blaze of light emanated from the windows of the building in which the ball was being held, and formed with the blue moonlight one of those contrasts which dioramas and stereoptical views affect. Having traversed the vestibule, I entered an immense hall in the form of a parallelogram or playing card, set around with great pillars, resting on a broad stylobate, which formed a platform around the room, and from which steps led to the floor. This arrangement struck me as excellent, and we ought to imitate it in rooms intended for entertainments; it enables those who do not take an active part in the pleasures of dancing, to

overlook the dancers without being in their way and to enjoy comfortably the spectacle presented by the animated throng. The platform divides and groups figures in a more picturesque, more splendid, more dramatic manner. Nothing is so disagreeable as a crowd on a level; this is why society entertainments are so inferior, as regards their effectiveness, to the balls at the Opera, with the triple row of boxes filled with masked guests, forming wreaths, and the company of débardeurs, titis, Pierrettes, Red-skins and babies, ascending and descending the stairs.

Though the hall was decorated in the simplest manner, it was none the less bright, elegant, and rich; everything was white, walls, ceiling and pillars, relieved by a few quiet golden touches on the mouldings; the columns, covered with polished stucco, imitated marble admirably, and the light fell upon them in long, shining tears. On the cornices rows of tapers marked the entablature of the portico and helped out the brilliancy of the lustres. Thanks to the white colour of the hall the light equalled the brilliancy of the most splendid Italian *a giorno* illumination.

Undoubtedly movement and light are elements of enjoyment, but in order that an entertainment may

have full swing noise has to be added to it; noise, which is the breath and the song of life. The company, although very numerous, was silent; scarce did a faint whisper pass like a murmur over the groups, making a low continuous bass to the sound of the orchestra. The Russians are silent in their pleasures, and after having once had the ears deafened by the triumphant bacchanal of Opera nights, one cannot help being surprised at their quiet and taciturnity. No doubt they are inwardly enjoying themselves very much, but they do not look as if they did.

There were dominoes, a few masks, uniforms, black coats, a few Lesghin, Circassian and Tartar costumes, worn by wasp-waisted officers, but there was not a single typical costume which might be noted as belonging to the country; Russia has not yet produced its characteristic disguise. Women, as usual, were in small numbers, yet it is women one goes to a ball to meet. So far as I could judge, what is called the *demi-monde* with us is represented here only by French women exported from Mabille, by Germans, and by Swedes, who are sometimes wondrously beautiful. Possibly a Russian feminine element may also form a part of it, but it is not easy for a foreigner to recog-

nise it; so I give my remark for what it may be worth.

In spite of a few timid attempts to dance the "can-can," a Parisian importation, the entertainment was somewhat slow, and the brazen blasts of the music did not greatly help it. The arrival of the gypsies was awaited, for the ball was to be interrupted by a concert. When the gypsy singers appeared on the platform, an immense sigh of satisfaction was breathed by every one: at last the enjoyment was coming, the real entertainment was beginning. The Russians are passionately fond of gypsies and of their songs so full of exoticism and home-sickness, which make one dream of a free life in primitive nature, away from all the constraints of divine and human laws. I share that passion to excess, so I elbowed my way through the press in order to get nearer the stage where were the singing girls.

There were five or six of them, haggard, wild-looking young girls, with that sort of a shy look called out by brilliant light upon nocturnal, furtive, and vagabond creatures; they looked like does suddenly brought from a forest clearing into a drawing-room. Their costume was in no wise remarkable; they evidently had left off their characteristic dress and put on

fashionable gowns to come to the concert; the consequence was they looked like ill-dressed ladies' maids. But a single flutter of the eyelids, a black, wild glance, cast at random over the spectators, sufficed to revive all that was characteristic in them.

The music began; it consisted of strange songs of a sweet melancholy, or a mad gayety, embroidered with infinite *fiorituri*, like those of a bird which listens to itself and is intoxicated with its own song; of sighs of regret for a vanished, brilliant life, with careless returns of a joyous, free humour that laughs at everything, even at lost happiness provided freedom remain; of choruses interrupted by stamping of feet and cries well calculated to accompany those nocturnal dances that make upon the sward of clearings what are called "fairy rounds;" something like Weber, Chopin, or Liszt, in a wild state; sometimes the theme of the song was borrowed from some popular melody heard on every piano, but it disappeared under prolonged notes, trills, ornaments, and caprices; the originality of the variations made one forget the commonplaceness of the motive. The marvellous fantasies of Paganini on the "Carnival of Venice," may give some idea of these delicate musical arabesques of silk,

gold, and pearls, embroidered on coarse stuff. A gypsy, a sort of fierce-looking rascal, brown as an Indian, and recalling the gypsy types so admirably reproduced by Valerio in his ethnographic water-colours, accompanied the song of the women on the cords of a big rebec placed between his legs, and on which he performed after the manner of Eastern musicians. Another tall fellow jerked about on the platform, dancing, striking his heels, tickling a guitar, marking the rhythm on the case of the instrument with the palm of his hand, making strange grimaces and uttering from time to time an unexpected shout. He was the "gracioso," the clown, the fun-maker of the company.

I cannot describe the enthusiasm of the listeners as they crowded around the platform. They broke out into applause and shouts; they wagged their heads, they uttered cries of admiration, they took up the choruses. These mysteriously strange songs have a genuine power of incantation; they induce vertigo and delirium and produce a most incomprehensible state of mind. On hearing them one feels an irresistible desire to leave civilisation forever and to travel through the forests, in company with one of those dark-

complexioned witches with eyes like lighted coals, for these songs, so majestically seductive, are indeed the very voice of Nature, noted and seized in solitude; that is why they trouble so deeply all those upon whom weighs heavily the complicated mechanism of human society.

While still under the charm of the melody, I was wandering dreamily through the masked ball, my soul was thousands of miles away: I was thinking of a gitana of the Albaycin at Grenada, who had of yore sung to me *coplas* on an air which resembled those I had just heard, and the words of which I was seeking in some recess of my mind, when I suddenly felt my arm taken and in my ears whispered, in the sharp, thin, false voice of a humpback, affected by dominoes that desire to begin an intrigue, the well-known words —"I know you." In Paris that would have been quite natural, since I have for many years frequented first performances, the boulevards, and the museums, so that I am as well known as if I were famous; but in Moscow this statement made at a masked ball, struck my modesty as being somewhat venturesome.

The domino, whom I called upon for a proof of her assertion, whispered my name under the lace of her

mask, pronouncing it very nicely with a pretty little Russian accent which the disguised voice did not prevent my noting. We began to talk, and the conversation proved to me that if the Moscow domino had never met me before this ball, she at least knew my works thoroughly. It is difficult for an author so far away from the Boulevard des Italiens, to whom one quotes a few lines of his verse and of his prose, not to swell somewhat with satisfaction, as he breathes in this incense, which is the most delicate of all for a writer. In order to reduce my self-love to its proper position I was obliged to say to myself that the Russians read a great deal, and that the least French authors have a larger circle of readers in St. Petersburg and Moscow than in Paris itself. However, in order to return the compliment, I did my best to be gallant, and to reply to the quotations by madrigals, which is rather difficult with a domino concealed in a satin sack, the hood pulled down over the head, and the lace of the mask as long as a hermit's beard. The only thing that showed was a rather small hand, carefully gloved in black. This was too much mystery and it took too much imagination to be amiable; besides I have one defect which prevents my seizing very ardently adven-

tures at masked balls: I am inclined to suppose that the disguise covers ugliness, rather than beauty; that horrid piece of black silk, with its profile like that of a flat nose, its wrinkled eye holes, and its goat's beard, always seems to me like the mould of the face it covers, and I find it difficult to separate the one from the other; I occasionally suspect women to be ugly when masked, even though I am certain that they are young and well aware of their beauty. Of course I speak here only of the complete mask; the little black velvet mask which the great ladies among our ancestors wore when walking, allows the mouth, with its pearly smile, the delicate contours of the chin and the cheek, to show, and brings out by its intense black the rosy bloom of the complexion. It allows one to judge of the woman's beauty without quite revealing it; it is a coquettish reticence and not a troublous mystery. The worst risk one runs is to come upon a Roxelane nose instead of the Greek nose one dreamed of, and that misfortune is easily got over. But the genuine domino may, when it is taken off, when the hour of love strikes, result in sinister discoveries which make a well-bred man feel uncommonly awkward. That is why after having taken two or three turns with her, I

took the mysterious lady back to the group which she indicated, and thus ended my intrigue at the masked ball in Moscow.

My day had been pretty well filled: I had spent the morning in a convent, the evening at a ball; I had met a nun and a domino; I had seen Byzantine painters and gypsies. Surely I deserved to go to bed.

When travelling one learns the value of time better than in the course of one's ordinary avocations. Staying for a few weeks or at most a few months in a country to which one may never return, innumerable interesting things which will not again be seen attract one's attention. Not a moment is to be lost, and the eyes, like the mouth at a railway restaurant, dreading the signal of departure, swallow double quantities at a time. Every hour is filled up. The absence of affairs, of occupation, of work, of bores, of visits to be received or paid, isolation amid strange surroundings, the perpetual use of a carriage, — lengthen out life singularly, and yet strange to say the time does not appear short. Three months of travel are the equivalent, so far as duration goes, of a year's stay in one's customary abode. At home the days which are unmarked by anything in particular, fall into an abyss of forgetful-

ness, without leaving any trace behind them; but when visiting a new country, the remembrance of unwonted objects, of unforeseen acts, form guiding marks, indicate the time, measure it and make one appreciate its length.

Apelles used to say, "Nulla dies sine linea:" (for lack of the Greek I quote the Latin, for these are not the words the painter of Campaspes probably uttered.) The tourist has to modify the saying to his own use: "No day without some sight-seeing." In accordance with this precept, the day after my expedition to Troïtza I went to the Kremlin to visit the Museum of Carriages and the Treasury of the Popes.

A very interesting exhibition is that of the old and splendid carriages; coronation coaches, gala coaches, travelling and country carriages, post-chaises, sleighs and other vehicles. Man does as nature, he goes from the complex to the simple, from the enormous to the proportionate, from the sumptuous to the elegant. Carriage-building, like the fauna of primitive times, has had its mammoths and mastodons. One is filled with astonishment at the sight of those monstrous rolling machines, supporting complicated apparatus, their springs in the form of tongs, their levers, their

thick leather bands, their massive wheels, their tortuous goose-necks, the boxes as lofty as forecastles, the bodies as roomy as a modern apartment, the steps like a staircase, the outer seats for pages, the platforms for lackeys, the tops covered with traceried galleries, allegorical figures and plumes. It is a perfect world, and one wonders how such machines could move. Eight huge Mecklenburg horses could scarce manage to draw them. But if these carriages are barbaric from the present point of view of locomotion, from an artistic point of view they are marvels. Every part is carved, ornamented, and wrought with exquisite taste. On the gilded backgrounds bloom lovely paintings done by master hands; detached from their panels they would figure honourably in museums. There are cupids, groups of attributes, bouquets of flowers, wreaths, coats of arms, fancies of all kinds. The windows are of Venetian plate glass; the carpets the softest and richest that Constantinople and Smyrna could furnish; the stuffs would drive Lyons silk-weavers to despair; the sides, backs and seats are upholstered in splendid brocades, velvets, damasks, and brocatelles. The carriages of Catherine I and Catherine II contain card and toilet tables, and, a fact

worthy of notice, stoves of Saxony porcelain, coloured and gilded. The state sleighs also display an ingenious contrast of form and a charming fancifulness of ornamentation. The most curious thing however, is the collection of saddles for men and women, and harnesses of all kinds. Most of them come from the East and were given to the Czars and Czarinas by the Emperors of Constantinople, the Grand Turk and the Shahs of Persia. They display an incredible wealth of gold and silver embroidery on brocade or velvet, which disappear under it, and stars and sunbursts of gems; bits, chamfrons, and curbs are studded with diamonds; and on the leather of the reins, richly embroidered with gold or coloured silk thread, are set uncut turquoises, rubies, emeralds and sapphires. Like the Asiatic barbarian that I deserve to be, I confess that this extravagantly splendid saddlery charms me more than modern English saddlery, very fashionable no doubt, but so meagre of aspect, so poor as regards the stock, and so sober in ornamentation.

The sight of these immense and sumptuous carriages tells one more about the former life of the court than all the memoirs of Dangeau and other palace chronicles. It makes one think of vast lives impos-

sible to be lived nowadays, even with absolute power, for the simplicity of modern manners invades the dwellings of sovereigns. The full dress for ceremonial days is now only a disguise which we hasten to throw off after the festival; save on the day of his coronation the Emperor never wears his crown, but either a military or civil head-dress like any one else; and if he goes out to drive, it is no longer in a gilded coach drawn by white horses tossing their plumed heads. Formerly such magnificence was of daily occurrence; men lived familiarly in that splendour; death was the only thing common to kings, great nobles, and common men, and the former passed before the dazzled earth like beings of another race.

I was shown the Treasury of the Popes, which is also in the Kremlin. It is the most amazing collection of wealth imaginable. There are arranged in cases, the doors of which are half opened like the shutters of a reliquary, tiaras, mitres, caps of Metropolitans and Archimandrites, mosaics of gems, brocaded dalmatics, copes, stoles, robes of gold or silver cloth, all embroidered in figured patterns, or covered with inscriptions written in pearls. At Troïtza I might well have believed there were no pearls left in the world, that

the Troïtza Convent had collected them all in those bushel measures: but there were just as many in the Treasury of the Popes. Innumerable were the silver, silver-gilt and gold ciboriums, chased, inlaid, engraved, circled with zones of enamels, ringed with precious gems; of crosses peopled with microscopic figures; of rings, of croziers, of fabulously rich ornaments; of lamps, of candlesticks; of books bound with plates of gold, constellated with onyx, agate, lapis-lazuli and malachite. These I beheld behind the glass fronts, with that mingled pleasure and discouragement of the traveller who when he can devote a few lines only feels that he would need a whole monograph that it would take a life-time to write.

That evening I went to the theatre, which is large and splendid, and recalls, in its general arrangement the Odéon at Paris and the Bordeaux Theatre. Such perfect regularity makes little impression upon me, and for my own part I should prefer the least architectural fancy in its disorderliness and bloom, in the style of the Vassily Blajenny or the Granovitaïa Palata, but that would be less civilised and would be considered barbaric by people of good taste. Nevertheless I must confess that once the type is accepted the style

of the Moscow theatre leaves nothing to be desired; everything in it is grandiose, monumental and sumptuous; the red and gold chosen for the decoration of the hall, please the eye by their serious richness, favourable to dress; and the imperial box placed exactly opposite the stage, with its gilded staffs, its two-headed eagles, its coats of arms and its lambrequins, produces a majestic and splendid effect; it takes up in height two rows of boxes and happily breaks the curved lines of the galleries. As in La Scala, San Carlo and in all the great Italian theatres, a passage way runs around the orchestra stalls, and facilitates access to the seats; — an access made still easier by another passage way left free in the centre. Nowhere is space parsimoniously economised as with us. It is possible to go in and out without disturbing any one, and to talk, from the outside, with the ladies in the boxes. The orchestra stalls, the first rows of which by a tacit convention are reserved to people of title, of high official rank and other important personages, — are very comfortable. A merchant, however rich and however honourable he may otherwise be, would not dare to sit nearer than the sixth or seventh row from the front. The same hierarchy is observed in the rows of boxes, at least

such was the case at the time of my trip; but whatever the place which one takes it is certain to prove comfortable: the spectator is not sacrificed to the spectacle, as is too frequently done in the theatres of Paris, and pleasure is not purchased at the price of torture. One enjoys the amount of space that Stendhal considered necessary for the proper appreciation of music, without being troubled by the enthusiasm of one's neighbor. Thanks to the art of heating, which the Russians possess in the highest degree, because it is with them a matter of life and death, — a pleasant, equable temperature is maintained everywhere; and one does not run the risk, on opening the door or the window of the box, of being struck in the face by a blast of cold air.

In spite of all its comfort, the Moscow theatre was not well filled that evening; there were a great many empty places in the boxes and almost whole lines of stalls remained unoccupied, or at least here and there showed only a few groups of scattered spectators. It takes an enormous crowd to fill these vast theatres; in Russia everything is too large, and seems intended for the population of the future. It was a ballet night, for ballet and opera alternate in Russian theatres and are

not combined as with us. I cannot remember the fable or the story of the ballet performed that day; it was as disconnected as any Italian one, and merely served to link together a series of steps suited to the talent of the dancer. Although I have myself drawn up ballet programmes and consequently understand pretty well the language of pantomime, I found it impossible to follow the thread of the action through the *pas de deux*, the *pas de trois*, the *pas seuls*, and the evolutions of the "corps de ballet," which manœuvred with admirable *ensemble* and precision. What most struck me was a sort of mazurka performed by a dancer named Alexandrof, with a pride, elegance and grace far removed from the most unpleasant affectations of ordinary dancers.

A traveller's life is made up of contrasts. The next morning I went to visit the Convent of Romanoff, a few versts from Moscow. It is famous for its beautiful music. Like Troïtza it has the external appearance of a fortress; within its vast boundaries are a great number of chapels and buildings, and a cemetery which looked particularly lugubrious on this winter 's day; gloomy indeed were the snow-covered crosses, the funereal urns and columns that broke through the

white sheet outspread over the dead like another shroud. One is haunted by the thought that the poor dead that are lying under their icy coverlet must be very cold and must feel more forgotten than ever, for the snow effaces their names and the pious inscriptions which accompany them and that recommend their souls to the prayers of the living. After a melancholy glance at these half-covered tombs, the deserted appearance of which was increased by the black foliage of the evergreen trees, I entered the church. The gilded Ikonostas amazed me by its prodigious height, which surpassed that of the most gigantic Spanish retables. Service was going on and I was straightway surprised to hear sounds like those produced by the double diapasons of our organs; for I knew that the Greek ritual does not admit of the use of these instruments. I soon found an explanation of the matter, for as I approached the Ikonostas I caught sight of a group of bearded chanters, dressed in black like popes; instead of singing with full voice as ours do, they strive after softening effects, and produce a sort of drone the charm of which it is easier to enjoy than describe. Imagine the sound produced on summer evenings by a flight of gray night moths; it is a grave, sweet and

penetrating note. There were about a dozen of them and I could tell the bass singers by the way they swelled out their chests while the melody issued from their lips, without these being perceptibly moved. The finest religious singing I have heard has been in the Imperial Chapel at St. Petersburg and in this Convent of Romanoff. No doubt we possess more learned and beautiful musical compositions, but the way in which plain-song is sung in Russia adds to it a mysterious grandeur and inexplicable beauty. I am told it was St. John Damascene who, in the eighth century, was the great reformer of sacred music; it has been modified but little since, and it was the same chants, arranged for four voices by modern composers, that I heard. Italian influence invaded sacred music for a time, but not for long; and Emperor Alexander I would not permit any other singing in his own chapel than the old chants.

On returning to the hotel, still full of this celestial harmony, I found letters recalling me to St. Petersburg, and I regretfully left Moscow, the real Russian city, with its Kremlin crowned with a hundred domes.

HOMEWARD BOUND

FOR days, weeks, indeed for months I had been putting off my return to France. St. Petersburg had proved a sort of frozen Capua in which I had allowed myself to be charmed by the pleasures of a delightful life; and it was hard for me, I confess it without shame, to return to Paris to resume the newspaper yoke which has bruised my shoulders for so many years. To the great attraction of new things was added that of the most pleasant intercourse; I had been petted, feasted, spoiled, loved even, at least I am conceited enough to believe it; and I could not part from all these things without regret. A new life had enveloped me, suave, caressing, and flattering, and I found it difficult to throw off that soft pelisse. Yet I could not remain forever in St. Petersburg. More pressing letters constantly arrived from France, and the great day was at last definitely fixed.

I was a member of the Friday Society, a company of young artists who used to meet every Friday, now

at the studio of one, now at the studio of another, to spend the evening in drawing, painting in water-colours or in sepia, improvised compositions which were sold by Begrof, and the proceeds of which were devoted to the assistance of some impoverished comrade. At about midnight a jolly supper closed the evening's labours. It so happened that on the Friday, the day before I was to leave, it was my turn to treat the company, and the whole band met at my lodgings, situated in the Morskaïa Street. As usual the evening was begun with work; everyone sat down to his desk, prepared beforehand, with a shaded lamp; but the work did not get on very well; we were all preoccupied, conversation interfered, and the sepia or Indian ink not infrequently dried up in their saucers between one touch and another. For more than seven months I had lived on a footing of true comradeship with these clever, sympathetic young fellows, lovers of the beautiful and full of generous ideas. Now I was about to leave, and when one parts who knows when one will ever meet again, especially when separated by a great distance, and when one's lives, which have run together for a time, are about to resume their ordinary course. So a certain melancholy hovered over the Friday com-

pany, and the announcement of supper came very opportunely to sweep it away. The toasts drunk to my happy trip revived gaiety, and the stirrup cup was drunk at such length that my friends resolved to remain up till daylight, and to accompany me in a body to the railway station.

Spring was on its way; the great break-up of the Neva had taken place, and only a few belated ice-floes were carried along by the current, to melt in the warm gulf henceforth open to navigation. The roofs had lost their ermine covering, and in the streets the snow, changed into a black slush, formed puddles and quagmires at every step. The damage done by the winter, long masked by the white layer, now appeared clearly; the pavements were disjointed, the roads broken, and our drojkis, roughly jolted from rock to rock, broke our backs and made us jump like peas in a gridiron. However, the bad state of the roads never prevents the izvochtchiks from going as if the devil was after them; provided the two front wheels go with them, they are perfectly satisfied and do not trouble about their fare.

We soon reached the railway station, and then thinking that the separation had come too soon, the whole company got into the carriage with me and in-

sisted upon accompanying me as far as Pskof, at that time the terminus of the road. This habit of escorting parents or friends who are leaving, strikes me as peculiar to Russia, and I think it is a touching custom: the bitterness of departure is softened by it, and solitude does not suddenly succeed embraces and handshakings. But at Pskof we had to part, my Friday friends returned to St. Petersburg, and I felt that this was the final departure, that the real voyage was about to begin.

I was not returning alone to France: I had for travelling companion a young man who had lived in the same house with me in St. Petersburg, and with whom I had soon formed a friendship. Although he was French he knew, wonderful to say, almost all the Northern tongues, — German, Swedish, Polish, and Russian; he spoke the latter as if it were his mother tongue. He had often travelled through Russia, in every direction, on every kind of vehicle, and in every temperature. When travelling he practised wondrous sobriety: could do without almost any food or drink, and stood fatigue amazingly, although apparently he was delicate and accustomed to the most comfortable life; but for him I never could have managed to return at that time of the year and over such wretched roads.

Our first care was to hunt through Pskof for a carriage which we could hire or buy, and after much going and coming we found a sort of broken down drojki the springs of which did not seem very trustworthy. We purchased it on condition that if it broke down before we had travelled forty versts the seller should take it back less a small commission. It was my prudent friend who bethought himself of this arrangement, and a very wise plan it was, as will presently be seen. Our trunks were fastened at the back of the frail vehicle; we sat down upon the narrow bench, and the driver sent his horses off at a gallop. It was the very worst season of the year for travelling. The road was one long mudhole, somewhat more consistent by comparison with the vast sea of liquid mud which it traversed. To right, to left, and before us, the prospect was composed of dirty gray sky, resting upon a horizon of black, wet ground, with here and there the wild-looking, reddish branches of a few half-submerged birch trees, the gleam of pools of water, and log-huts on the roofs of which remained a few spots of snow, that looked like pieces of paper carelessly torn away. In the deceitful warmth of the temperature, there was felt, as evening came on, blasts of sharp

wind that made me shiver under my furs; the wind did not grow warmer as it blew over that mixture of ice and snow. Flights of crows marked the sky with black dots, and flew with loud croaks to their night's rest. It was not very gay, and but for the conversation of my comrade, who was telling me of one of his trips to Sweden, I should have become very melancholy indeed.

Moujik carts laden with wood travelled along the road, drawn by little horses bespattered like poodles and sending the mud flying about them; but on hearing the bells of our horses they respectfully drew aside and allowed us to pass. One of the moujiks was even honest enough to drive after us to bring up one of our trunks, which had fallen off, though we had not heard it, owing to the noise we were making ourselves.

Night had nearly fallen and we were not very far from the post-house. Our horses were going like the wind, excited by the neighbourhood of their stable. The poor drojki jumped upon its weak springs and followed diagonally the flying animals, the wheels being unable to turn quickly enough through the thick mud; a stone we struck gave us such a violent shock that we were nearly thrown into the quagmire; one of the springs

had broken and the forebody had separated from the rest of the vehicle. The coachman got down and with a piece of rope repaired the broken carriage as well as he could, so that we managed to reach the relay-house. The drojki had not lasted fifteen versts. It was impossible to think of continuing our trip in such an old rattle-trap; there were in the courtyard of the post-house no other carriages than telegas, and we had yet five hundred versts to go before reaching the frontier.

In order that my readers may thoroughly grasp the horror of our situation a brief description of a telega is necessary. This peculiarly primitive vehicle is composed of two boards placed lengthwise on two axles, with two wheels apiece; narrow side planks border the boards; a double rope covered with a sheepskin is fastened to these and forms a sort of swing on which the traveller has to sit; the postilion stands upon the cross beam or sits down on a bit of board, and the trunks are piled up behind. To this machine are harnessed five horses which a cabman would refuse at once, so wretched do they look when at rest; but the best race horses would find it difficult to follow them once they have started. This is not a mode of transport to be recommended to sybarites, but it is a very

rapid one, and a telega is the only kind of carriage which can stand being driven over roads broken by a thaw.

We held a council of war in the yard. My companion said to me: "You wait for me here; I shall drive on to the next relay and will return for you with a carriage if I find one."

"What is that for?" I replied, rather astonished at his proposal.

"Because," replied my friend, refraining from smiling, "I have started on many a telega trip with comrades who appeared both courageous and robust; they climbed proudly on to the swing and during the first hour confined themselves to making a few faces and indulging in a few contortions which they at once repressed; then very soon with sore backs, sore knees, sore waist, their brain jolting about in their skull like a dry nut in a shell, they began to grumble, to complain, to lament, to curse; some indeed even wept and begged me to let them get down or to throw them into a ditch, preferring to die of hunger and cold on the spot, or be eaten by wolves, to submitting any longer to such torture. No one of them ever travelled more than forty versts."

"You have too poor an opinion of me; I am not a soft traveller; the galleys of Cordova, the floor of which is formed of esparto; the tartanas of Valencia, which are like the boxes in which marbles are rolled in order to make them round, did not draw a single complaint from me; I have travelled post on a cart, hanging by my hands and feet to the sideboards. A telega cannot possibly surprise me. If I should complain you may reply to me as did Guatemotzin to his companion on the gridiron: 'Do you suppose that I am on a bed of roses?'"

My proud answer seemed to convince him; the telega was harnessed, our trunks put on and we were off.

But what about dinner? for the Friday supper must have been digested by this time and a conscientions traveller is bound to give his readers the menu of every meal he takes on the road. We had only a glass of tea and a thin slice of brown bread and butter, for when one starts upon such extravagant trips eating is out of the question, as it is with postilions when they are riding post at full speed.

I should not care to maintain the paradox that a telega is the most comfortable of carriages, yet it ap-

peared to me more tolerable than I had expected, and I managed without too much difficulty, to keep my place on the horizontal rope somewhat softened by the sheepskin placed upon it. As night fell the wind became cold, the sky was cleared of clouds, and the stars shone clear and bright in the sombre blue heavens, as if frosty weather were coming on.

During a thaw cold spells are not infrequent; the Northern winter finds it difficult to go back to the Pole and returns sometimes to cast handfuls of snow in the face of spring. By midnight the mud was all hardened, the pools of water were frozen, and the heaps of petrified mud caused the telega to jolt worse than ever.

We reached the post-house, easily known by its white façade and its pillared portico. All these relay houses are alike, and are built from one end of the empire to the other on one regular model. Our bundles and ourselves were taken off the telega and put on to another, which at once started; we were going at full speed, and objects vaguely seen through the shadows, fled in disorderly fashion on either side of the road, like a routed army, as if an unknown enemy were pursuing these phantoms. The hallucinations of night began to cloud my eyes, already heavy with sleep, and

in spite of myself dreams mingled with my thoughts; I had not gone to bed the night before and the absolute need of sleep caused my head to bob from one shoulder to the other. My companion made me sit down in the bottom of the carriage and held my head between his knees, to prevent my cracking my skull against the side boards. The most violent jolting of the telega, which occasionally on sandy or miry places on the road, travelled over logs placed crosswise, failed to awaken me, but caused the outlines of my dream to deviate like the drawing of an artist whose elbow is shoved while he is working; a figure begun with the profile of an angel turns into the face of a little devil.

I slept for about three-quarters of an hour and awoke rested and refreshed as if I had slept in my own bed. Speed is the most intoxicating pleasure; it is delightful to go along like a whirlwind, in the hurly-burly of bells and wheels through the great silence of night, when all men are resting, and one is seen only by the stars that wink their golden eyes and seem to point out the road; the feeling that one is doing something, travelling on, proceeding towards a distinct end, during these hours usually lost, fills one with curious pride, leads to indulgence in self-admira-

tion and makes one begin to despise somewhat the Philistines, who are snoring under their blankets.

At the next relay the same ceremony took place: a most fantastic entry into the yard, and a rapid transshipment of our persons from one telega to the other.

"Well," I said to my companion when we had left the post-house, and the postilion was sending his horses at full speed along the road, — "I have not yet begged for mercy; the telega has been jolting us for many a verst; yet my arms still stick to my shoulders, my legs are not broken, my backbone still supports my head."

"I did not know you were such a veteran; the worst is over now, and I fancy I shall not be obliged to drop you by the road side, with a handkerchief at the end of a stick, to call for help from the barouches or post-chaises which might pass through this deserted country. But since you have had a sleep it is your turn to sit up and watch; I am going to close my eyes for a few minutes. Do not forget, in order to keep up the speed, to thump the moujik in the back from time to time; he will pass it on with his whip to the horses. Also call him 'dourak,' in as big a voice as you can: it will do no harm."

I conscientiously discharged the task allotted me, but I may as well state at once, in order to free myself in the eyes of philanthropists of the reproach of barbarism, that the moujik wore a thick sheepskin coat, the wool of which deadenèd every outside blow: I might as well have been hitting a mattress.

When day dawned I saw with surprise that during the night snow had fallen over the country we were about to traverse. Gloomy indeed did that snow look, for its thin layer only half covered, like a ragged shroud, the ugliness and wretchedness of the land soaked and softened by a recent thaw. On the slopes on which its narrow lines rose and fell it looked somewhat like the pillars of Turkish tombs in the cemetery of Eyoub or Scutari, which the sinking of the ground has caused to fall or to lean over in quaint attitudes. Presently the wind began to drive in great whirls a sort of fine, minute, pulverized snow, very much like hoar frost, which stung my eyes and that portion of my face which the need of breathing compelled me to leave uncovered. It is impossible to imagine anything more disagreeable than that wearing little torture, augmented by the speed of the telega, which was facing the wind. My moustache was soon constellated with white pearls

and bristling with stalactites, through which my breath issued vaporous and bluish like tobacco smoke. I was cold to the marrow, and I felt that unpleasant sensation which precedes dawn, known to every traveller and every sort of nocturnal adventurers. However hardened to travelling one may be, a telega does not come up as a resting-place to a hammock, or even to the green leather sofas found everywhere throughout Russia.

A hot glass of tea and a cigar which I enjoyed at the relay while the horses were being put to set me up again, and I proudly continued on my way, thoroughly enjoying the compliments of my comrade, who said he had never seen a Westerner bear up so heroically in a telega.

It is very difficult to describe the country we were traversing, as it appears at this time. It consists of slightly undulating plains, blackish in tone and on which are seen poles intended, when the snows of winter have effaced the roads, to show the way; in summer they must look like telegraph poles out of work. Nothing is seen on the horizon but birch forests, sometimes half burned; scattered villages lost in the wastes and indicated only by their churches with

their little bulbous cupolas painted apple green. At this moment, upon the dark background of mud which the frost of the night had hardened, the snow had cast here and there great bands like pieces of linen laid out on meadows to whiten in the dew; or if this comparison seems to you too pleasing a one, like the galloons of white thread seen on the rusty black of a mortuary pall of the lowest class. The faint light which came through the vast gray cloud that covered the heavens, was lost in diffused gleams, and gave neither high lights nor shadows to objects. There was no modelling; the contour of everything seemed to be illumined with a mere, flat tint. In the dull light everything looked dirty, gray, washed out, wan, and a colourist would have been as disappointed as a draughtsman at this faint, undefined, vague landscape, which was morose rather than melancholy. But what consoled me and prevented my wearying, notwithstanding the regret I felt on leaving St. Petersburg, was the fact that we were homeward bound; every jolt through this gloomy country brought us nearer the Fatherland, and after seven months' absence I will be able to judge whether my Parisian friends have or have not forgotten me. Besides, the very motion on a diffi-

cult trip keeps one up, and the satisfaction of triumphing over obstacles takes away one's mind from smaller troubles. When a man has seen much of a country and does not expect to constantly encounter enchanting persons, he becomes accustomed to those glimpses of nature which at times does poor work and nods like the greatest poets. More than once one feels tempted to say, like Fantasio in Alfred de Musset's play: "That sunset is a failure. Nature is wretched tonight. Look at that valley yonder and at those miserable clouds ascending that mountain. I used to draw landscapes like that on the cover of my books when I was twelve."

We had long since passed Ostrof, Registza, and other villages and towns, concerning which it will be readily understood I did not make very careful observations from the top of the telega; but even had we remained longer in each one of them I could only have repeated descriptions already given, for all these places are alike: one always comes upon the same board fences, the same wooden houses with double sashes through which one gets a glimpse of an exotic plant, the same green painted roofs, the same churches with their five belfries, and their narthex adorned with

paintings after the Byzantine model. In the centre of it all stands out the post-house with its white façade, in front of which hang about a few moujiks in greasy tulupes, and a few yellow-haired children; as for women, they are rarely visible.

The day was waning and we could not be very far from Dunabourg. We reached it in the dying light of a livid sunset, which did not cause this city, inhabited mostly by Polish Jews, to look particularly attractive. The sky was like that one imagines in a painting representing a plague of a dull gray, full of morbid, greenish tints like those of decomposing flesh; under that sky the black houses soaked with rain or melting snow, and suffering from the ravages of winter, resembled piles of wood or filth half submerged in a village of mud; the streets were perfect quagmires, the melting waters flowed into them from all sides, seeking their lowest level, yellow, earthy, blackish, bearing with them an incredible quantity of nameless débris. Swamps of mud filled the squares, spotted here and there by islets of dirty snow that still resisted the western wind. In this loathsome filth, which would have made a man sing a hymn in honour of Macadam, the telega wheels revolved like the paddles of a steamer

in a muddy stream, splashing the walls and the few passers-by, who wore long boots like oyster fishermen. We sank into this stuff up to the axles. Happily below this deluge the wooden pavement still existed, and although it was distorted by water, it did present at a certain depth a somewhat firm surface, which prevented our disappearing with our horses and our carriage, as one does in the quicksands of Mont Saint-Michel.

Our pelisses, thanks to the constant spattering of mud, had become regular celestial globes with innumerable constellations of mud, undescribed by astronomers; and if it were possible to look dirty in Dunabourg people would not have picked us up with a pair of tongs.

Single travellers are rare at this time of year; few people are bold enough to travel in a telega, and the only other possible mode of transportation is the mail carrier's cart; but one has to book a place a long time ahead, and we had left suddenly, like a soldier who sees his leave nearly up and has to rejoin his regiment at any cost under pain of being considered a deserter.

My companion went on the principle that one should eat as little as possible on trips like the one we were taking, and he was more temperate than a Spaniard or

an Arab. Nevertheless, when I represented to him that I was dying of hunger, not having taken anything since Friday night and it was now Sunday evening, he condescended to what he called my weakness, and leaving the telega at the relay house, started with me in search of food. Dunabourg goes to bed early and but few lights shone on its sombre façades. It was not easy to walk through the mud; at every step I took it seemed to me that an invisible bootjack was catching hold of my shoes by the heel. At last we saw a reddish light issuing from a sort of hovel that looked somewhat like a tavern. The reflection of the light was prolonged over the limpid mud in red streaks like blood flowing from a slaughter-house. It was not very appetising, but when one is as hungry as I was, these things matter little. We entered without allowing ourselves to be driven back by the sickening smell of the place, in which a smoky lamp was burning with difficulty in the mephitic atmosphere. The room was full of Jews of strange aspect, with long, narrow-chested coats like cassocks, shining with grease, the colour of which might have been black as much as violet, or maroon as much as olive; but which at that moment was of a shade which I will call condensed

dirt. They wore queer-shaped hats with broad brims and enormous crowns; these had lost their colour, and were shapeless, greasy, the nap bristling in places, gone in others, old enough for the rag picker to refuse to have anything to do with them. And such boots! the glorious Saint-Amant alone could describe them; they were down at heel, worn out, twisted in spirals, whitened by layers of half-dried mud, like the feet of elephants that had long plunged through the Indian jungles. Several of these Jews, especially the younger, wore their hair parted on the forehead, and let fall behind their ear a long curl like a love-lock, a piece of coquetry that contrasted with their horrible filth. They were not the handsome Oriental Jews, heirs of the patriarchs who have preserved their biblical nobility, but horrible Polish Jews, who carry on in filth all manner of low trades and sordid industries. Yet lighted as they were, even with their thin faces, their restless, piercing eyes, their beards forked like fish tails, their sour complexions and their colouring like that of a smoked herring, they recalled Rembrandt's paintings and etchings.

These customers did not seem to be very profitable to the establishment; in the dark corners there were

it is true, to be seen a few fellows slowly drinking down a glass of tea or vodka, but there was not a trace of solid food. Understanding and speaking German and the Polish tongue of the Jews, my comrade asked the tavern keeper whether he could not arrange to give us some kind of a meal. This request seemed to surprise the man; it was the Sabbath day, and the food prepared the night before for this day, on which it is forbidden to do anything, had been devoured, crumbs and all. Nevertheless our starving appearance touched him; his pantry was empty, his fire was out, but he thought he might find some bread in the next house. He consequently gave orders to this effect, and in a few minutes we saw appearing amid this mass of human rags, bearing with a triumphant air a sort of flat cake, a young Hebrew girl of marvellous beauty, the Rebecca of "Ivanhoe," the Rachel of "la Juive," a real sun blazing like an alchemist's macrocosm in the darkness of that sombre room. Eliezer at the well would have presented her with Isaac's betrothal ring. She was the purest imaginable type of her race, a genuine biblical flower blooming, Heaven knows how, upon this dung-hill. The Shulamite of Sir Hasirim was not more orientally intoxicating. Such

gazelle eyes as she had! such a delicately aquiline nose, such lips, red as double-dyed Tyrian purple, that showed upon a mat pallor; such a chaste oval from the temples to the chin! well made to be framed within the traditional band. She held out the bread smilingly like the maids of the desert who bend their urn to the thirsting lips of the traveller; but smitten with admiration of her, I did not think of taking it. A faint flush coloured her cheeks when she perceived my admiration, and she placed the bread on the table. I uttered a suppressed sigh as I remembered that the age of passionate adventures had long since gone by for me; and while dazzling my eyes with the radiant apparition I began to bite at the bread, which was at once uncooked and burned, but which seemed to me as delicate as if it had come from the Viennese Bakery in the Rue de Richelieu.

There was nothing to keep us in the den; the lovely beauty had gone; her disappearance causing the smoky room to look even darker than before, so we returned to our telega with a sigh, remarking that it was not always velvet jewel-cases that contained the finest pearls.

We soon reached the bank of the Dvina, which we had to cross. The banks are high and the bed of the

river is reached by pretty steep board inclines. Fortunately the skill of the postilions is marvellous, and the little Ukraine horses are very sure footed. We got down without accident and in the darkness we could hear the waters boiling and seething. The stream is crossed neither by a bridge of boats nor by a ferry, but by a series of rafts placed end to end and bound together by cables; this enables them to resist better the swelling of the waters, as they rise and fall. The crossing, though not really dangerous, was somewhat terrifying. The stream swollen by the melting snows, flowed full, and fought against the obstacles presented by the rafts, the cables of which it stretched taut. At night water easily assumes a lugubrious and fantastic appearance; gleams of light, falling no one can tell whence, move about like phosphorescent serpents; the foam sparkles in a strange way that makes the dark seem darker. One appears to be floating upon an abyss, and it was with a feeling of satisfaction that we reached the other bank, carried away by our horses that galloped up the slope almost as rapidly as they had galloped down the opposite one.

We were flying again over the great black stretches, getting merely a glimpse of shapes that vanished from

my memory as swiftly as they passed before my eyes, and of which no description can give any idea. These faint visions which arise and vanish as one rides along, are not without a certain charm of their own; it is like galloping through a dream; the glance would like to penetrate the vague, cotton-wool like obscurity in which all the contours are softened, and where the various objects are merely darker spots.

I was thinking of the lovely Jewess whose face I was imprinting deeply in my memory, like a draughtsman who goes over the outlines of his sketch lest it should be effaced; I tried to remember how she was dressed but I could not succeed in doing so; I had been so absolutely dazzled by her beauty that I had seen her face only; all the rest was plunged in shadow; the light was concentrated upon her, and if she had been dressed in gilded brocade flowered with pearls it would not have been noticed any more than a cotton rag.

At day-break the weather changed and turned decidedly wintry. Snow began to fall, but this time in great flakes; layer fell upon layer and soon the country was white as far as we could see. Every moment we were obliged to shake ourselves in order not to be

buried in the telega, but it was lost labour: in a few moments we were again dusted all over like tarts sugared by the confectioner. The silvery down mingled, ascended and fell under the breath of the wind; it was just as if innumerable feather beds were being emptied from on high, and we could not see four yards ahead through the whiteness. The little horses impatiently shook their wild manes: the wish to get away from the storm lent them wings and they galloped at full speed towards the relay in spite of the resistance offered to the wheels by the new fallen snow.

I have a queer love of snow and nothing delights me so much as that glazed rice powder which whitens the brown face of the earth. I prefer its virginal, immaculate whiteness, which sparkles like Parian marble, to the richest tints; and when I am travelling over a snow-covered road I feel as if I were walking on the silver sands of the Milky Way. On this occasion I must own, my taste was too largely gratified, and our situation in the telega began to be unbearable; even my friend, impassible though he was and accustomed to the rigour of hyperborean travelling, agreed that we should be more comfortable by the side of a stove in a well closed room, or even in an ordinary post-chaise,

supposing a post-chaise could have travelled in such weather.

The storm soon changed to a blizzard. Strange indeed is this down-flecked tempest: a low wind sweeps the earth and drives the snow onward with irresistible violence; white, smoky clouds cover the ground with whirling flakes like the frozen smoke of a Polar conflagration. When the blast strikes a wall it heaps up the snow against it, soon tops it and falls on the other side like a cascade. In one moment ditches and beds of streamlets are filled up; roads disappear and can be traced only by means of the guide poles. If one were to stop one would be buried in five or six minutes as under an avalanche. Trees bend, posts yield, animals bow their heads to the wind that carries along those vast masses of snow. It is the khamsin of the Steppes.

This time it is true, the danger was not very great; it was daylight; the quantity of snow which had fallen was not very great, and we could enjoy the spectacle almost without peril. But at night a blizzard may very well overwhelm and destroy you.

Sometimes there passed through the whiteness, like black cloth rags, flights of crows or ravens, borne

along by the wind, upset and capsised on the wing. We also met two or three moujiks' carts trying to regain their huts and fleeing before the tempest.

It was with genuine satisfaction that we faintly saw on the edge of the road through these chalky hatchings that crossed in every direction, the post-house with its Greek portico. No building ever appeared to me so sublime. In a twinkling we were out of the telega, we had shaken off the snow from our fur coats, and had penetrated into the travellers' room with its warm temperature. At the relay houses the samovar is kept constantly boiling and a few sips of tea as hot as my palate could bear soon restored the circulation of my blood, somewhat cooled by so many hours spent in the icy air.

"I would willingly undertake with you a voyage of discovery to the North Pole," said my friend, "and I think you would prove a charming companion. How comfortably we could live in a snow hut with plenty of pemmican and bears' hams."

"I am proud of your approbation, for I know that you are not naturally a flatterer; but now that I have sufficiently proved that I can resist jolts and the weather, it seems to me it would not be a proof of cowardice if

we tried to discover a pleasanter way of continuing our trip."

"Let us go and see if there be in the yard any carriage less open to the weather: useless heroism is mere braggadocio."

The yard, half filled up with snow which men with brooms and shovels were trying in vain to throw back into the corners, presented a very curious sight. It was filled with telegas, tarantasses, and drojkis, the poles and shafts of which rose in the air like the yards and masts of half-sunken ships. Beyond these primitive vehicles we discovered through the innumerable white flakes that whirled in the blast of the gale, something like the back of a whale cast ashore in the foam; it was the leather hood of an old barouche which in spite of its worn-out appearance we hailed as an ark of safety. The other vehicles were drawn aside; the barouche was pulled into the centre of the yard and we ascertained that the wheels were in good condition, the springs fairly solid, and that if the windows did not close very tight, at least none were lacking. It is true that we should not have presented a very fine appearance in such a trap in the Bois de Boulogne, but we did not propose to drive round the lake and to excite the ad-

miration of the ladies. We were very glad to hire it to take us to the Prussian frontier.

It took but a few moments to transfer our trunks and ourselves to this concern and we were off at the same rate as before, — somewhat more slowly, however, on account of the violence of the wind which drove before it clouds of icy snow. Although we kept every window closed there was soon a ridge of snow upon the empty seat. Nothing is sufficiently close to keep out that impalpable white powder, crushed and sifted by the gale; it makes its way through the least fissures like the sand of the Sahara, and even into the case of a watch. But as neither of us was a sybarite grumbling at a crumpled rose leaf, we enjoyed with deep delight the relative comfort: we could at least lean our backs and our heads against the old green cloth lining, not very well stuffed it is true, but infinitely preferable to the rope of the telega. If we dropped off to sleep we no longer ran the risk of falling and breaking our necks.

We turned the situation to account to snatch a little sleep, each in one corner, but without allowing ourselves to slumber too soundly, for this is occasionally dangerous in a very low temperature, the thermometer having fallen nearly to zero under the influence of the icy snow.

But little by little the gale died down, the flakes of snow suspended in the air fell to the ground, and we could see the country, white all over as far as the eye could reach.

The weather became much milder. We traversed the Vilia, which flows into the Niemen near Kovno, by means of a ferry which was adjusted to the level of the low banks of the river, and we reached the city, which looked well under the fresh fallen snow. The post-house stood on a handsome square, surrounded by regular buildings and planted with trees which at that moment resembled constellations of quicksilver. Onion and pine-apple shaped steeples rose here and there above the houses, but I had neither time nor courage to visit the churches they indicated.

After a slight meal of sandwiches and tea we had horses put to the barouche in order to traverse the Niemen by daylight, for the days are not very long in the month of February in this latitude. Several vehicles, telegas and carts, were traversing the river at the same time; and when we were half way across the yellow, turbulent water almost reached up to the beams which formed the gunwale of the boats; they yielded to the pressure and came up again as the teams progressed towards the other bank. If any horse had

taken fright it would have been the easiest thing in the world to be upset in the current with all our belongings; but Russian horses although very spirited, are very gentle and do not take fright for so small a matter.

A few moments later we were galloping towards the Prussian frontier, which we expected to reach during the course of the night in spite of the groans and the clatter of iron work of our poor barouche, heavily jolted but which nevertheless kept together and did not faithlessly drop us on the road.

Towards eleven o'clock we reached the first Prussian outpost, from where we were to send back the carriage to the relay where we had obtained it.

"Now," said my companion, "that we no longer have to perform acrobatic exercises upon awful carts, it would be wise to sup quietly and to get our complexions up again, so as not to look like spectres when we reach Paris."

It may easily be believed that I made no objection to this brief but substantial discourse, which so accurately interpreted my own thoughts.

When I was a small boy I used to fancy that the frontiers of countries were marked on the ground with a blue, red or green tint, as on maps. It was a foolish

and childish notion, but although the line of demarcation is not drawn with a brush, it is none the less abrupt and distinct; at a spot indicated by a white post, with diagonal stripes, Russia ended and Prussia began in sudden and complete fashion. The neighbouring country did not run into it nor it into the other.

We were shown into a low room provided with a great China stove that roared harmoniously; the floor was strewn with yellow sand; a few framed engravings adorned the walls; the tables and chairs were of German shapes; and the table was laid by tall buxom maids. It was long since we had seen women employed in these domestic matters which seem to belong more to their sex; in Russia and the East it is men who wait upon you, at least in public.

The cookery was different; — beer soup, veal with currants, hare with red currant jelly, and sentimental German pastry took the place of chtchi, caviare, ogourtsi, grouse, soudaks; everything was different, the shape of the glasses, the knives, the forks, innumerable trifles which it would take too long to enumerate, proved constantly that we had passed into another country. We washed down the copious meal with a bottle of Rüdesheimer poured into roemers of an em-

erald colour and claret that proved excellent in spite of its pompous etiquette, printed with ink that had a metallic reflection.

While dining I exerted myself to moderate my mad voracity, in order not to die of indigestion as do shipwrecked people picked up from the raft on which they have consumed, having exhausted their scanty score of biscuit, the leather tops of their shoes and the elastics of their braces. If I had been wise I would have taken only a cup of broth and a biscuit dipped in Malaga wine, so to accustom myself somewhat to food; but let us hope my supper will not give me any trouble.

Costumes had changed. At Kovno we had seen the last tulupes and the faces were no more alike than the clothes. Instead of the vague, pensive look of the Russians, we now beheld the stiff, methodical, formal look of the Prussians, who are a very different race. Little low caps, with visors well down on their foreheads; short tunics, trousers tied at the knees and full on the legs, porcelain or meerschaum pipes or else an amber cigar-holder curiously angular, in which the cigar sticks straight up. In this guise did the Prussians appear to me at the first post; I was not surprised for I was already acquainted with them.

The carriage into which we got was like those small busses used in country houses to fetch from the railway station the Parisian guests expected to dinner. It was comfortably upholstered; the windows closed tight, and it was hung on good springs, at least it appeared to us to be so, after the telega trip we had just finished and which fairly represents the torture of the strappado in use in the Middle Ages. But what a difference there was between the mad speed of the little Russian horses and the phlegmatic trot of the great, heavy Mecklenburg steeds that seemed to go to sleep as they travelled and which were scarcely awakened by the caressing touch of the whip nonchalantly applied to their fat quarters. German horses are no doubt acquainted with the Italian proverb: "*Chi va piano va sano.*" They turn it over in their mind as they raise their big hoofs, but drop the second half: "*Chi va sano va lontano*," for Prussian relays are much closer to each other than Russian.

All the same, even though we did not go fast, we did get along and morning found us not far from Koenigsberg, on a road bordered by great trees and which stretched as far as we could see. It had a really fairy-like appearance; the snow had frozen on the

branches of the trees, and outlined the smallest twigs with diamond crystals of extraordinary brilliancy, making the avenue look like an immense archway of silver filigree, leading to the enchanted castle of a Northern fay. The snow, it will be seen, knowing the love I felt for it, was lavishing its wonders upon me at the moment of leaving us, and regaling me with its brilliant spectacle. Winter was accompanying us as far as it could and found it difficult to leave us.

Koenigsberg is not a very gay city, at least at this time of year; the winter is very severe and the windows still had on their double sashes. I noticed several houses with crow-foot gables, the façades painted pale green, and blazing with richly ornamented S's as at Lübeck. Koenigsberg is the native city of Kant, who brought back philosophy to its real essence by his "Criticism of Pure Reason." I fancied I could see him at every street corner, in his iron-gray coat, his three-cornered hat, and his shoes with buckles, and I thought of the disturbance of his meditations, due to the absence of a slender poplar which had been cut down, and on which for more than twenty years he had been accustomed to gaze while sunk in his deep metaphysical reveries.

We went straight to the station and each secured a corner in the carriage. We went at one stretch to Cologne, where first we got rid of the snow. There, as the trains did not connect, we were obliged to make a short stay, which we turned to account to regain something of the human aspect, for we looked like Samoyedes who had come to exhibit reindeer on the Neva. The rapidity of our telega trip had produced a curious variety of damage in our trunks:—the blacking of our boots had rubbed off and the bare leather showed; a box of excellent cigars was reduced to a state of powder; the seals of letters entrusted to us had been broken away; several of the envelopes had opened, and there was even snow between my shirts. Having put these matters in order we went to bed after an excellent supper. The next day, five days after leaving St. Petersburg, I reached Paris, at nine in the evening, fulfilling my formal promise. We were only five minutes late. A coupé was waiting for me at the station and a quarter of an hour later I was among old friends and pretty women, in front of a table blazing with light, on which smoked a delicate supper; and my return was joyously celebrated until the dawn.

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

PART II — SUMMER IN RUSSIA

THE VOLGA FROM TVER TO NIJNI-NOVGOROD

AFTER my long stay in Russia I found it somewhat difficult to fall in again with Parisian ways; my thoughts often returned to the banks of the Neva, and fluttered around the cupolas of Vassily Blajenny. I had seen the Empire of the Czars in winter only, and I wished to traverse it in summer, on those long days when the sun sets for but a few minutes. I was acquainted with St. Petersburg and Moscow but I knew nothing of Nijni-Novgorod, and how was it possible to live without having seen Nijni-Novgorod?

How comes it that the names of certain cities irresistibly master your imagination and murmur in your ears for years, with a mysterious harmony like musical phrases

caught by chance and which one cannot get rid of? The strange haunting is well known to all those whom an apparently sudden resolve drives from their country to the most unexpected places. The demon of travelling whispers syllables of incantation while you work or read, while you are happy or sorrowful, until you are compelled to obey. The wisest plan is to resist the temptation as little as possible, the sooner to be rid of it; once you have inwardly consented you need not trouble any more: let the spirit that suggests the thought do the rest; under its magic influences obstacles vanish, ties are loosened, leave is granted, and money, which could not be obtained for the most honourable and the legitimate needs, comes to you delighted and ready to serve as a viaticum. The passport goes of itself to be covered with stamps at the legations and embassies; your clothes pack themselves in your trunk, and it turns out that you happen to have a dozen brand new shirts, a new suit of blacks and an overcoat fit to resist the most varied freaks of weather.

Nijni-Novgorod had long cast that irresistible spell upon me. No melody sounded so delightfully in my ears as its dim, distant name; I repeated it unconsciously like a litany, with a feeling of individual pleasure; its

configuration took my fancy as if it were an arabesque of curious design. The collocation of the "i" and the "j," the alliteration produced by the final "i," the three dots marking the word like notes to be lengthened, — charmed me in a way that was at once puerile and cabalistic. The "v" and the "g" of the second half of the name, also had their peculiar attraction, while the "od" had about it an imperious, decisive and conclusive air which made any objection impossible. So after a few months' struggle I felt I must go.

A genuinely plausible motive, the necessity of going to Russia to collect materials for a great work on the treasures of art of that country, a work on which I had been engaged for several years, had brought me already, without too much improbability in the opinion of sensible people, to that original and singular city of Moscow, which I had formerly seen crowned by winter with a silver diadem, and its shoulders covered with a mantle of snowy ermine. That was three-quarters of the way. With a farther stretch to the East I should attain my end. The demon of travel had arranged things in the most natural manner possible: in order that nothing should keep me back it

had sent abroad or else to their estates, the people whom I ought to have seen; so there was no obstacle, no pretext, no remorse to prevent my satisfying my desire. I collected my materials in haste, but while I was visiting the marvels of the Kremlin, the name of Nijni-Novgorod, traced by the tempter's finger, shone in capricious Slavonic characters, mingled with flowers upon a dazzling background of gold plate and Ikonostases.

The simplest and shortest way was to take the line of railway which goes from Moscow to Vladimir, and then to post to Nijni; but the fear of not obtaining horses, for it was the time of the famous fair which collects in the city three or four hundred thousand people of all countries, made me prefer the roundabout way so rarely chosen to-day. The Anglo-American maxim: "Time is money," is far from being mine, and I am not a tourist always in a hurry to reach his destination. Travelling in itself is what most interests me.

Contrary to middle class wisdom I began by retrograding as far as Tver, in order to take the Volga almost at its source, where I would entrust myself to its peaceful current, and thus be carried indolently to my destination. So little eagerness after such lively

desire may perhaps surprise my reader, but as I was now sure of seeing Nijni-Novgorod I was no longer in a hurry. No doubt the vague apprehension "which makes man fear the fulfilment of his wish," influenced me unconsciously and moderated my impatience. Would the city I had dreamed of vanish at my approach at the breath of reality like unto the banks of clouds on the horizon which assume the form of domes, towers, necropolis, and which a breath of wind changes or sweeps away?

Too faithful to the motto of railways: *linea recta brevissima*, the rigid railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow leaves Tver on one side and I had to reach it in one of the fast drojkis which in Russia never fail the traveller, and seem to spring from below ground at the call of his desire.

The Hôtel de la Poste, where I put up, is as large as a palace. It might be a caravansary for whole migrating tribes. Waiters dressed in black, with white cravats, received me and led me with English formality to a vast room in which a Parisian architect would easily have found space for a whole apartment. We traversed a corridor the length of which recalled the monastic passages of the Escorial. In the dining room

a thousand guests might have been seated in comfort. While despatching my dinner in the recess of a window, I read on the corner of my napkin the hyperbolic and fabulous number, "three thousand two hundred!" Yet, but for the laughter, the bursts of talk, the rattling of sabres of a few young officers seated in a neighbouring room, the hotel appeared to be absolutely deserted. Great dogs, as weary-looking as those of Aix-la-Chapelle, of which Heinrich Heine speaks, were wandering in melancholy fashion through it as through a street, in quest of a bone or a caress. As they arrived from the distant kitchens the tired out waiters placed upon the table with a sigh, the half-cold dishes.

From the balcony I viewed the great square of Tver from which radiate many streets. In one corner an acrobat's show exhibited its sign and sent out its shrill music, which idlers, no matter to what country they may belong, can scarcely resist. In the distance, right opposite me, the dome and the bulbous belfries of a church, with gilded crosses and chains, stood out against the sky; the sides of the square were lined with the façades of handsome houses. Private troikas passed swiftly, drawn by thoroughbred horses; public carriages stood in line, and moujiks already wearing their

tulupes, were settling themselves to sleep at the foot of the stairs.

The long days when the sun merely disappears to reappear a minute later, almost mingling its setting and dawn, were already past, but night did not fall before ten or eleven in the evening. It is difficult for Westerners to imagine the colouring of the sky during that long twilight; the palettes of our painters are not prepared for it; Delacroix, Diaz, and Ziem, would be amazed at it and wonder by what bold combinations they might succeed in reproducing it; if they did so their paintings would be charged with exaggeration. One feels as if one were in a different planet and that light came refracted through the prism of a different atmosphere. Shades of turquoise and apple-green melt into rose-coloured bands, which turn pale lilac, mother-of-pearl, steel blue, with inexpressibly delicate gradations. Or again it has a milky, opaline, iridescent whiteness such as we imagine to be that of the immaterial light of Elysium, which is produced neither by the sun, by the moon, nor the stars, but by an ether luminous in itself and yet veiled.

Against this fairy sky, as if to bring out more strongly the ideally tender tints of it, passed flocks of

crows and ravens, returning to their nests, performing evolutions regulated by a sort of strange ceremonial and accompanied by croaks to which it is difficult not to attribute a mysterious meaning. These hoarse calls, broken by sudden silence and varied by choral outbursts, seem to be a sort of hymn or prayer to night. The pigeons, which are respected in Russia as being the symbol of the Holy Ghost, had already gone to roost, and lined all the mouldings and projections of the church. There are incredible numbers of them and the faithful piously scatter seed for them.

I went down to the square on my way to the river, without a guide and without any indications, trusting to that instinct of the topography of cities which rarely fails an old traveller. Taking the street which cut at right angles the beautiful street of Tver, I soon reached the banks of the Volga. The main street tried to resemble a St. Petersburg Prospect, but it was less frequented, and being farther from the centre had preserved the genuine Russian characteristics: — it was lined on either side by fences of painted boards and wooden houses painted in diverse colours and surmounted by green roofs. Above these rose the tops of trees of a rich, fresh green. Through the panes of

the low windows I got a glimpse of the hot-house plants which are intended to make the dwellers forget the whiteness of the six months' winter. A few women were returning from the river, barefooted, carrying bundles of linen on their heads. Peasants in telegas urged on the little wild-maned horses, as they brought back wood from the wood-yards along the shore.

At the foot of the bank, which is pretty steep but which the drojkis and carts ascend at a pace that would terrify Parisian drivers and horses, showed the funnels of the steamers forming the flotilla of the Samolett Company. As the river is not very deep here, it is impossible to use vessels of much draft. Having secured my berth, for the steamer was to leave very early in the morning, I continued my walk along the river bank. The brown water reflected, as in a dark mirror, the splendours of the twilight, adding to their magnificent intensity and vigour. The opposite bank, bathed in shadow, projected like a long cape into an ocean of light, for it was difficult to distinguish between heaven and water. Two or three little boats, working their oars as a drowning insect wiggles its legs, rayed here and there the sombre and clear mirror; they seemed to float in a vague fluid, and at times I

could not help fearing that they would be wrecked on the inverted reflection of a dome or a house.

Farther on a dark line cut the river at its surface, like the causeway of an isthmus; on drawing nearer I perceived it was a long raft which bridged the two shores; a portion of it could be swung open at will to allow vessels to pass. It was a bridge reduced to its simplest expression. The severe frosts, the floods and ice shoves make it difficult to use standing bridges on Russian rivers, for such constructions are almost always carried away. On the edge of the raft women were washing linen; not satisfied with using their hands to clean it they trampled it after the Arab fashion: the striking fact made my thoughts suddenly swerve to the Moorish vapour baths of Algiers, where I remember seeing young *idoulets* dancing in soapsuds upon the bathing towels. The quay, from which there is a beautiful view, serves as a promenade. Crinolines worthy, as far as their size went, of figuring on the Boulevard des Italiens, spread out luxuriously, and little girls walked three or four yards from their mothers, — the circumference of the skirts not permitting them to approach nearer, — in short dresses with hoop skirts that resemble the hooped kilts of the

dancers of the days of Louis XIV. When a moujik, in stuff smock-frock, esparto sandals on his feet, dressed about as was the peasant of the Danube before the Roman Senate, passed near these fashionable dresses, I could not help being startled by the sudden contrast: nowhere do extreme civilisation and primitive barbarism elbow each other in more marked fashion.

It was time for me to go back to the hotel and to imitate the crows. The glow of the sky was slowly fading out; a transparent obscurity enveloped all things, destroying the modelling without effacing them, as in that marvellous vignette in Gustave Doré's illustrations of Dante, in which the artist has so admirably rendered the poetry of twilight. Before going to bed I leaned for a moment from my balcony, lighted a cigar, for in Russia it is forbidden to smoke on the streets (a prohibition since removed), and gazed at the magnificent sky, the intensely brilliant scintillation of which reminded me of the Eastern heavens. Never had I seen in the blue night such a swarm of stars; the void was full of them, at unmeasured depths; it was like a dust of suns. The silvery meanderings of the Milky Way showed with startling clearness; and the glance might readily believe that it could make out in that

flood of cosmic matter the stellar explosions of new worlds, while the nebulæ seemed to endeavour to resolve and condense themselves into stars. Dazzled by the sublime spectacle which I was perhaps contemplating alone at the time, for man uses very moderately the privilege which, according to Ovid, has been granted him, of bearing his head high and gazing at the heavens, I let the dark hours fly by without thinking that I had to be up by dawn. Finally I returned to my room.

Notwithstanding the wealth of linen which the formidable number on my napkin had indicated, there was but a single sheet on my bed, no larger than a small tablecloth, and which the agitation of the least dream was bound to cause to fall off. I am not of those who are constantly breathing out elegies about the discomforts of travel, so I rolled myself philosophically in my pelisse and laid down upon one of the broad leather sofas found everywhere in Russia, the comfort of which explains and makes up for the insufficiency of the beds. It had the further advantage that I should not have to dress with the somnambulistic gestures and the sleepy hurry that are to be reckoned among the most unpleasant incidents of travel.

As soon as I appeared at the hotel door a drojki dashed towards me at full speed, followed by several others which tried to pass it; Russian drivers rarely miss an opportunity of indulging in that kind of performance. As they come up at almost the same time, they fight for a customer, disputing with amusing volubility but without violence or brutality; the traveller having picked out one, the others go off at a gallop and disperse in every direction.

A few minutes sufficed to bring my trunk and myself to the bank of the Volga. A boarded slope led to the landing place, near which the little steamer "Nixie," was getting up steam, with jets of white smoke, impatient to be off. The late comers, followed by their luggage, and dragging their carpet bags along, hastily traversed the gangway which was about to be withdrawn; the bell sounded for the last time and "The Nixie," turning its paddles gracefully, slid down the stream.

At Tver the Volga is yet far from having the great breadth which, when it is about to flow into the Caspian Sea, makes it resemble the mighty rivers of America. Sure of its future grandeur it begins its course modestly, without swelling its waves or casting

mad foam, and flows between two rather flat banks. The colour of the water surprises one when examined, the shimmer of the light, the reflection of the sky, and of objects being allowed for: it is brown and resembles strong tea. No doubt the Volga owes this colour to the nature of the sand which it holds in suspension and is constantly displacing, for it changes its tint with as much inconstancy as the Loire, a fact which makes the navigation of the stream if not perilous, at least difficult, especially at this part of its course, and at a time of year when the water is low. The Rhine is green, the Rhone blue and the Volga brown; the first two seem to wear the colours of the seas to which they are travelling: does that analogy hold good for the Volga? I do not know, for I have not yet been able to behold the Caspian Sea, that vast puddle of water forgotten in the centre of the land by the withdrawal of the primitive ocean.

Meanwhile "The Nixie" proceeded peacefully, leaving behind it a wake of foam like beer froth, so I turned the time to advantage by casting a glance at our travelling companions. Let us gaze, without fearing to be improper, at the limit, not much respected for the matter of that, which separates the first class from

the second and third. Well-bred people are the same in every country, and if in their more intimate manners they offer differences noticeable by the observer, they do not present marked characteristics which the quickly travelling tourist may note with his pencil upon his note-book.

In Russia there has not been hitherto any intermediate class. No doubt one will soon be formed, thanks to the new institutions, but they are too recent to have produced any visible effect as yet, and the general aspect still remains the same. The nobleman and the tchinovnik (functionary) are equally distinguished by their dress or uniforms from the common people. The merchant preserves his Asiatic caftan and his long beard; the moujik his pink shirt which forms a blouse, his full trousers stuck into the tops of his boots, and, if the temperature sinks, his greasy tulupe, for the Russians, no matter to what class they belong, are usually very sensitive to cold, although in the West we fancy they brave, without feeling it, the most rigorous temperature.

This part of the deck was encumbered with trunks and bundles, and it was impossible to pass along it without stepping over the sleepers; the Russians, like Eastern peoples, lie down wherever they happen to be;

a bench, a board, a step, a box, a coil of ropes, anything will answer the purpose; they are often satisfied if they can lean againt a wall, and manage to sleep in the most inconvenient attitudes.

The installation of the third class on board "The Nixie" reminded me of the decks of a steamer in the ports of the Levant, when Turkish passengers are being taken on board. Every one was in his own corner, in the centre of his luggage and his provisions, and families were grouped together, for there were both women and children. They looked like a tribe floating away. Some of them wore a long blue or green robe fastened with three buttons on the side and drawn in at the waist with a narrow belt; these were the most elegant and richest. Others had red shirts, brown felt smock-frocks, or sheepskin tunics, although the thermometer was up to seventy. As for the women their costume consisted of a cotton gown, of a sort of jersey jacket coming down half way to their knees, and of a coloured kerchief thrown over the head and tied under the chin. The youngest wore shoes and stockings, but the old women, disdainful of this concession to Western fashions, had put on their feet big boots greased with tallow.

In order to give a right tone to this sketch it would need to be dirty, soiled, glazed with bitumen, scratched, and scaly, for the costumes I have tried to depict are old, dirty, worn out and ragged; the owners wear them night and day and leave them only when they are left by them. The relatively high price explains this constancy. Nevertheless, these moujiks, apparently so neglectful of their dress, go to the vapour baths once a week, and what is below the clothes is cleaner than the clothes themselves; besides, it would be imprudent to trust to appearances. I was often shown one of the dirtiest and most ragged of these people, while my friend whispered in my ear: "You would give that man a kopeck if he held out his hand. Well he owns more than a hundred thousand rubles in silver." Although this was told me in the most serious manner, and with the admiring respect which the statement of a large sum of money always inspires, I found it difficult to believe in the fortunes of these ragged Rothschilds and Pereires, with boots down at heel. The faces have nothing very characteristic about them, though occasionally the pale gold of the hair, the straw colour of the beard, the steel gray eyes, plainly indicate a Northern race. The summer sun had put a yellow

mask upon the faces and made them of almost the same shade as that of the hair and the beard. The women were scarcely pretty, but their gentle, resigned plainness was in no wise disagreeable; their faint smile allowed one to see handsome teeth, and their eyes, though somewhat wrinkled, did not lack for expression; in the poses they assumed as they settled on the benches, a vestige of feminine grace revealed itself under their heavy garments.

Meanwhile "The Nixie" was proceeding onwards with ever-watchful prudence; in order that the pilot might see the river afar and note obstacles, the wheel was placed on the bridge connecting the two paddle-wheel boxes; he worked the rudder by a system of chains that transmitted the impulsion. In the bows, leadsmen, armed with graduated poles, were constantly calling out the depth of water with a rhythmic cry. Buoys painted red and white, poles, branches of trees planted in the river bed, marked out the navigable channel, and it really required extraordinary familiarity with this mode of navigation to make one's way through these capricious meanderings. In certain places the sand almost came to the surface, and "The Nixie" more than once scraped the gravel; but a more rapid

turning of the wheels bore her away and carried her into the current without its being once necessary to have recourse — a humiliating thing to do — to the salvors who, standing on flat boards and leaning on long boat hooks, await vessels endangered as they pass over the shallows. The real peril would be to strike some of those great boulders which are strewn here and there in the Volga mud, and which are hauled up and placed on the bank when an accident has revealed their presence. Sometimes they rip up vessels and the cargo goes to the bottom.

The banks, the gullied liassic soil of which testifies to the rise of the river when the snows melt, are not picturesque, at least in this part. They form a series of undulations that run one into another without sudden breaks, without characteristic changes. Sometimes a fir wood breaks the long yellow bands with its dark verdure, or else the horizontal line is interrupted by the angles of the roofs of the log-houses of a village. There is always in every village a church with white-washed walls and green dome.

Every time "The Nixie" passed a building devoted to worship I could tell it even if my back was turned, by the bowing of the heads, the swinging of the bodies

and the signs of the cross made by the moujiks, the women of the lower class, and the sailors; one of them, indeed, I used as an indicator: possessed of remarkable sight he could make out on the extreme horizon the most imperceptible steeple and crossed himself with automatic precision and rapidity. Then I pulled out my glass, getting ready to look at the church or monastery when it came within reach. In the West piety itself is sober in its demonstrations, religious feeling keeps within the soul, and these external practices amaze the stranger; yet is it not quite the thing to bow to the House of God?

The traffic on the Volga was very animated and the interesting sight kept me for long hours leaning against the bulwarks of "The Nixie." Boats were going down the river, spreading vast sails set on tall masts, to draw the faintest breath of air. Others were ascending, drawn by tow horses, which have neither the size nor the strength of our robust draft horses, but numbers make up for vigour. Each team was usually composed of nine animals, and at regular distances relays installed upon some sandy plain formed camps in which Swertzkov, the Russian Horace Vernet, would have found admirable suggestions for pictures.

A few crafts of lesser tonnage were being poled up; a hard task it is for the boatmen to walk constantly along the rail, leaning upon a pole with all their strength; these poor people do not live long; I am told that they rarely attain more than forty years of age. Some of the boats are very large although of shallow draft; an apple green band sometimes brightens the silvery gray tint of the pine of which they are built; in the bow are frequently seen huge, painted, wide open eyes, or else the Russian eagle roughly daubed, curving its two necks and displaying its black wings. Ornaments carved with an axe, with an accuracy that the chisel could not surpass, adorn the poop. Most of those craft carry enormously valuable cargoes of corn. The steamers of the Samolett Company and those of a rival company would meet us and on each craft the ensign was set with scrupulous nautical politeness. I must note also the canoes dug out of tree-trunks like Indian canoes, which came alongside in spite of the turmoil made by the paddle wheels, threw on board letters from the small places where "The Nixie" did not put in, and caught flying the mail bag thrown to them.

There was a continual going and coming of passengers on board "The Nixie," at every stopping place

some landed or came on board; the stops were sometimes quite long; wood was taken on to feed the fires, for coal is not used by reason of its being scarce and expensive. The long piles of firewood arranged along the banks have led the old retrograde peasants to say that if the railways and steamers go on as they are doing people will soon have to die of cold in holy Russia.

These landing places, all built on the same plan, consist of a square pontoon supporting two rooms built of wood, the one serving as an office, the other as a store-room and waiting-room, the two separated by a broad passage intended for the travellers and the luggage. As the height of the water varies, a wooden bridge, sloping more or less steeply, joins the landing float to the bank. On the sides of the bridge the numerous small traders attracted by the passage of the steamer, arrange their frail stalls and are grouped in picturesque fashion. Little girls offer you baskets containing five or six apples of an acid green, or little cakes on which are printed with moulds, as is done with butter pats among us, amusingly barbarous figures; among them imaginary lions which if they were cast in bronze and covered with an archaic

patina, might pass for specimens of Ninevite art. Women carrying a pail of water and a glass, sell kwas, a sort of drink made of rye and aromatic herbs, the taste of which is very pleasant when one has got used to it; as the price is very low well-bred people disdain it and common people alone drink it. These women have a peculiarity in their costumes which is worth noting. The Empire fashion placed the waist under the breasts, and our eyes, accustomed to long waists, are struck by this eccentricity when seeing portraits of that day, even though they are painted with Gérard's skill or Prud'hon's grace. The Russian peasant women put their waists above their breasts, so that they appear to be buried in a bag up to the armpits. It is easy to imagine the most ungracious effect of this constant depression, which ends by flattening the firmest bosoms. — The rest of the costume consists of a chemise with full sleeves, and a pointed kerchief knotted under the chin.

There were also shops selling white and rye bread, the former very white, the other very brown, but the most paying business was that of ogourtsis, a sort of cucumber which is eaten fresh in summer and pickled in winter, and without which it seems the Russians are

unable to get along; they are served at every meal, they form the inevitable accompaniment of every dish, slices of them being eaten as in other countries one eats a piece of orange. This dainty struck me as insipid. It is true that the Russians, for some hygienic reason which I am not acquainted with, do not salt their dishes at all: they like unsalted things.

There is no use in my transcribing in French letters from the itinerary of the Samolett Company, the frequently complicated names of the small places at which we stopped; they almost always looked alike; steps formed of logs or boards leading down to the river from the crest of the bank, a Gostiny Dvor, a Government House and the richest dwellings of the place, the frames of their windows painted white on an olive or red ground; a church with four belfries around its dome, sometimes painted green, sometimes showing their covering of hammered copper or tin; the long walls of a cloister enclosure, covered with frescoes in the Byzantine taste of Mount Athos; and further off isbas built of logs, mortised at the corners. Add, by way of enlivening the picture, a few drojkis awaiting travellers and a few idlers whose interest in the arrival and departure of a steamer never palls.

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Cloisters on Mt. Athos

Kimra, however, had an air of festivity which surprised me. Pretty nearly the whole population was spread out from the bank of the river to the top of the ridge. A report had spread that the Grand Duke, the heir apparent to the throne, was on his way to Nijni-Novgorod on board "The Nixie." It was not so, for the Grand Duke passed later, on another vessel; but I profited without any scruples by the crowd which his presence had drawn, in order to note this collection of types. A few elegant toilettes affecting French fashions — allowing for the inevitable differences in time due to the distance between Paris and Kimra, stood out against the national background of sack-like skirts and old-fashioned French prints. Three young girls wearing little Andalusian hats, zouave jackets, and swelling crinolines were positively charming, in spite of a certain affectation of Western freedom; they laughed together and seemed to disdain the wealth of boots displayed by the other inhabitants, both men and women; for Kimra is as famous for its boots as Ronda is for its gaiters.

The shallowness of the river, and the necessity of picking up buoys, did not allow of navigation by night, so "The Nixie," blowing off steam and casting anchor,

stopped as soon as the last breath of the fresh wind died away with sunset. In the evening tea was served to every passenger and the samovars, vigorously heated, poured incessantly their boiling water upon the concentrated infusion. To me it was a curious sight to see people of the lowest classes, in appearance comparable to beggars in our own land, enjoying that delicate perfumed drink which is even yet a refinement with us and which dainty hands pour out for the guests in our drawing-rooms. The Russian way of drinking tea is first to cool it for a moment in the saucer, then to swallow it while holding between the teeth a small piece of sugar, which sweetens the drink sufficiently for the Russian taste, which in this respect is not unlike the Chinese.

When I awoke, upon the narrow divan of the cabin, "The Nixie" had started again; day was dawning; we were running past a bank, the crest of which was topped by the isbas of a village reflected in the waters of the stream, which was as smooth as a mirror.

We stopped at Pokrovski, a monastery of the sixteenth century, crenelated like a fortress. Most of the passengers landed for the purpose of praying in the church, and imploring the blessing of Heaven upon

their trip. In the penumbra of a mysterious chapel, covered with paintings and shimmering with gold, a pope or monk of Oriental aspect, chanted with an acolyte one of those beautiful melodies of the Greek rite, the effect of which is irresistible even when one does not share the belief which has inspired them. He had a magnificent bass voice, deep, rich, and sweet, and he used it to perfection.

Ouglitch which we passed towards the end of the day, is quite a large town, having no less than thirteen thousand inhabitants; the steeples, domes, and belfries of its thirty-six churches made its silhouette superb. The river, which is broader at this place, looked like the Bosphorus, and it would not have required a great stretch of imagination to transform Ouglitch into a Turkish city and its bulbous steeples into minarets. On the bank was pointed out to me a small building in the old Russian style, in which Dimitri, aged seven, was slain by Boris Godunoff.

At the confluence of the Mologa and the Volga, on sandy banks, innumerable flocks of crows and ravens were indulging in the strange evolutions which precede their going to rest. Gulls, which love great streams, were beginning to show. Higher up I had seen eagles

fishing for their supper some of those sturgeons which Western gourmets would pay for with their weight in gold.

The sunset, flaming with strange tints, had been succeeded by a blue, silvery, ideal moonlight, when we reached Rybinsk; the stream was almost barred by a flotilla of great vessels; through the black web of their spars and rigging sparkled a few lights, and a church spire rose in the night air like a rocket of quicksilver.

Rybinsk is an important commercial city and pleasure resort. The Volga, deepened and broadened by the tribute of the waters of the Mologa, allows large craft to ascend to this port and to start from it; so the sedentary population is augmented at certain seasons by a considerable number of travellers in search of amusement, and who are in excellent and generous temper on account of the profits they have made. One of the favourite amusements of the Russian people is to listen to airs and choruses sung by gypsies; it is impossible to imagine the intense delight taken in these by the hearers — a delight which is equalled only by the excitability of virtuosi. The enthusiasm of dilettanti at the Italian opera can give but a faint idea of it,

for here there is nothing conventional, nothing stimulated, nothing fictitious, and good form is forgotten. It is indeed the deep, barbaric feelings of primitive man which are stirred by those strange sounds.

I am not surprised at this taste for I share it, and as I had been told on the steamer that Rybinsk possessed a famous troupe of gypsies, I had accepted an invitation to pay them a visit, made by an amiable, clever, and cordial nobleman, a passenger on "The Nixie," with whom I would willingly have gone to the ends of the world.

The Count had landed first to arrange matters, telling me the name of the hotel where the concert was to take place. I reached the quay slowly, charmed by the sight of the wondrous night under the sky, the stars in which turned pale in the light of the moon. The stream spread out broad as a lake or an arm of the sea, cut by the dark line of boats. The luminous trail of the orb of night, the fainter reflections of the masts lengthened out on the water like ribbons of silver and black velvet, and the fluid shimmer of the current dentellated its edges. The crests of the green roofed houses on the banks, which were bathed in shadow, were tipped with a bluish light, but a few red

sparks showing here and there, proved that the inhabitants were not yet asleep. Standing on a large open square, the chief church showed like a silver block, with fantastic intensity of brilliancy; it seemed to be lighted with Bengal fires; its dome surrounded by a diadem of pillars, sparkled like a tiara studded with diamonds. Phosphorescent metallic reflections played upon the tin and copper roofs of the belfries, and the steeple, in a style of architecture recalling the Dresden spire, seemed to have spitted two or three stars on its golden finial. It was a supernatural, magical effect such as is seen in an apotheosis in a fairy play, when the blue distance of the perspective reveals, as it opens, the Palace of the Sylph or the Temple of Happy Hymens. The church of Rybinsk thus illumined, seemed to have been carved out of a fragment of the moon fallen to earth; flooded with the beams of the orb of night it shone with the same silvery, snowy light.

Scarcely had I reached the top of the quay, formed of great stones which the Volga upsets and tumbles over in flood time, than through the faint music issuing from the tea-houses, the dread cry of *Karaoul!* (police) struck on my ear, howled and rattled by a

voice that seemed to come from a throat slashed by a knife. I sprang forward; two or three shadowy forms took to flight; an open door was abruptly closed; the lights in the house went out and everything became dark. The silence of death had followed the call of despair. I passed two or three times before that door, but the place had turned black, mute and deaf, like Saltabadil's pot-house in the fifth act of the "Roi s'amuse." I had no means of entering this cut-throat place, for I was alone, a stranger, unarmed, unacquainted with the language, and in a country where no one helps you in case of accident or murder, for fear of the police and of being called as a witness. Besides it was all over; whoever the human being might be that had called so despairingly for help, was now past assistance. So you see my entry to Rybinsk did not lack for dramatic colour, and I regret I cannot relate to you in detail the story of the murder, for the cry I heard was indeed a cry of agony; but I know no more than I have told: shadowy night swallowed up the mystery.

Still much moved I entered a *traktir*, in which the portraits of Emperor Alexander II and Empress Alexandrovna, in superb frames, but painted like tavern

signs, formed companion pictures to the holy images, covered with gold and silver leaf and lighted by the quivering light of a hanging lamp. Tea was served, and while I was enjoying the national beverage, improved by a dash of cognac, a Cremona grinding organ was playing an air of Verdi's in the next room. I was soon joined by the engineer of the Samolett Company, and the chief engineer of "The Nixie;" and we went off together to find the inn where the gypsies were to be and where the Count had arranged to meet us.

The hotel, which belonged to a rich corn merchant whose acquaintance I had made on the boat, was situated at the other end of the town. The farther one went from the bank of the river the larger were the grounds round the houses, which were scattered over greater spaces and separated by long wooden fences. The streets ended in waste places, and plank walks enabled one to cross the mud holes. A few lean dogs sitting on their haunches were baying at the moon, and when we passed near them followed us, either through mistrust or sociability, or perhaps in the hope of being adopted. Under the influence of the moon a light, white mist was rising from the ground and interposing its vaporous gauze between us and the

surrounding objects, which it invested with a poetical life that daylight no doubt deprives them of. At last in the azure mass in which the last houses showed lilac gray, I perceived the red gleam of some lighted windows; that was the place. A light strumming of guitars, sounding in our ears like the obstinate song of a cricket, and the notes of which came sharper and sharper to us, soon led us to the door.

A moujik took us through long passages to a distant room. The Count, the corn merchant, and a young officer formed the audience. On the table, among bottles of champagne and glasses, two long tapers like church candles were stuck in candlesticks; the wicks were surrounded with yellow aureoles of light that scarcely managed to penetrate the thick smoke produced by the cigars and cigarettes. A full glass was held out to me on condition that I should empty it at once, in order that it might be straightway refilled; it was particularly excellent Roederer, such as is to be had in Russia only. Having performed the libation I sat down in mute expectation.

The gypsy women stood or leaned against the wall in indolent Oriental poses, without being in the least troubled by the glances fixed upon them; their attitude

was absolutely inert; their faces expressionless; they seemed exhausted or asleep. These wild natures, when not agitated by passion, sink into an animal calm which it is impossible to describe; they do not think, they merely dream, like the denizens of the forest. No civilized face could attain to their mysterious lack of expression, more excitingly alluring than all the grimaces of coquetry. The coldest and least poetical cannot help wishing they could provoke a flash of desire on those faces, and the wish soon turns into passionate longing.

Were they beautiful, at least, these gypsy women? No, not as one generally understands the word. Our Parisian ladies would unquestionably have thought them ugly, save one who was nearer the European type than her companions. Their complexion was olive, their hair thick and black, their bodies apparently slender, their hands small and brown; their costume had nothing characteristic; they wore neither amber nor glass-ware necklaces, no skirts diapered with stars and fringed with lace, no mantles striped in quaint colours; they were got up in some sort of Parisian fashion with the addition of a few barbarisms justified by the distance. In their flounced skirts, taffeta jackets, crino-

lines and nets, they looked like badly dressed ladies' maids.

So far my reader no doubt thinks the entertainment was not very remarkable, but he must be patient as I was and not despair of the gypsy woman, although she has given up, at least when she comes into the cities, her picturesque rags and ornaments: the thoroughbred should not be seen in the stable when it is blanketed; it is on the turf that action reveals its beauty.

One of the women, as if shaking off her lassitude and her torpor, in response to the obstinate appeals of the guitar played by a tall, scoundrelly looking fellow, at last made up her mind to advance to the centre of the circle. She raised her long eyelids, fringed with black lashes, and at once the room seemed full of light. Between her lips half parted by a faint smile, shone a white gleam. An indistinct murmur like a voice heard in a dream issued from her lips. Thus posed she looked like a somnambulist and appeared unconscious of what she was doing; she saw neither the room nor the spectators; she was transfigured: her features were ennobled and no longer had any trace of vulgarity; her height seemed greater and her mean dress fell in folds like an antique drapery.

Little by little she increased the volume of her voice and sang a melody slow at first, then more rapid, of most intoxicating quaintness. The theme seemed to be a captive bird whose cage is opened; still disbelieving that it is free the bird hops outside of its prison, then goes off, and when it is sure that there is no trap laid for it, it swells out its little throat, straightens itself up, utters a joyous cry and hurriedly flies with beating wings towards the forest where are singing its former companions. Such was the vision which came into my mind as I listened to that air of which no known music can give any idea.

A second gypsy woman joined the first and soon all the voices took up the winged theme, sending out rockets of scales, prolonging trills, embroidering the pauses, sustaining the modulations, making sudden stops and beginning again unexpectedly. They chirped, whistled, twittered, chattered with eager volubility, making a friendly, joyous tumult as if the wild tribe were welcoming the bird escaped from the city. Then the chorus ceased, the voice continued to sing alone of the delights of liberty and solitude, and the refrain marked the last phrase with tremendous energy.

It is very difficult if not impossible, to render in

words a musical effect, but it is at least possible to tell of the dream to which it gives rise. Gypsy songs have a singular power of evocation; they awaken primitive instincts obliterated by social life, remembrances of a former life one has believed vanished forever, and the longing for independence and vagabondage, secretly retained within the heart, awakens again. They fill one with a strange nostalgia for unknown countries which seem to be one's real motherland. Certain melodies sound on the ear like a *Ranz des vaches*, which one feels weakly unable to resist, and the desire seizes one to throw aside the gun, to abandon the post and to swim to the other bank where there is no discipline, no duty, no law, no morality other than caprice. Innumerable brilliant and confused pictures pass before one's eyes: parties encamped in clearings, bivouac fires on which are boiling pans suspended from three poles; striped garments drying on cords, and on one side crouching on the ground, in the centre of a game of tarocs, an old woman spelling out the future from cards, while a young gypsy girl, with swarthy complexion and blue-black hair, dances as she accompanies herself on a tambourine. The foreground vanishes in the dim perspective of vanished ages.

One sees vaguely a distant caravan coming down from the high plateaus, expelled no doubt from its native country on account of its spirit of revolt which can never be curbed; — the white draperies striped with crude red and orange, are blowing in the wind; the copper rings and bracelets glitter on the brown skins and the bars of the sistra emit a rattle of metallic sounds.

Do not suppose that these are simply a poet's reveries; gypsy music acts strongly upon the most prosaic beings, and makes even a Philistine sunk in obesity and routine, sing "tra la!" Nor is this music, as might be supposed, a wild music, a barbaric music; on the contrary, it is the product of a very complex art, different from ours, and those who perform it are genuine virtuosi, although they do not know a single note and are unable to transcribe a single one of the airs they sing so well. The frequent employment of quarter tones at first troubles the ear, but one soon gets accustomed to and finds a strange charm in them. It is a scale of new sonority, of quaint timbres, of shades unknown to the ordinary musical keyboard, which serve to express sentiments beyond the pale of all civilisation. For the gypsies have neither country,

nor religion, nor family, nor morality, nor political faith; they accept no human yoke and elbow society without ever entering it. As they brave or avoid every law, so they do not submit to the pedantic formulæ of harmony and counter-point; free caprice in free nature, the individual enjoying his sensations without remorseful memory of the night before and without care for the morrow. The intoxication of space, the love of change, and as it were the mania of independence, such is the general impression made by gypsy song. The themes resemble the songs of birds, the murmur of leaves, the sighs of æolian harps; the rhythm recalls the distant gallop of the horses of the steppes; they mark the time but they are fleeing.

The prima donna of the troupe was undoubtedly Sacha (diminutive of Alexandra) who had first broken silence and stirred the sleeping enthusiasm of her companions. Now the wild spirit of the music was unloosed and the gypsies were singing no longer for us but for themselves. Sacha's cheeks were flushed with an imperceptible rose, her eyes shone with intermittent flashes. Like Petra Camara she closed her eyelids like a fan, producing alternations of shadow and light. This method of using her eyes, whether

it was natural or of set purpose, was irresistibly seductive.

She approached the table; a glass of champagne was offered her, but she refused it, for gypsy women are temperate. Instead she asked for tea for herself and her friends. The guitar player, who was apparently not afraid of spoiling his voice, was drinking down one glass of brandy after another, in order to work himself up; stamping his feet on the floor and slapping the guitar with the palm of his hand, he kept on singing and dancing, gesturing like the devil and making grimaces by way of grotesque intermede, with a dazzling vivacity. He was the husband, the *rom* of the fair-haired gypsy. Never did a couple conform less strictly to the maxim: "Husband and wife should be alike."

For more than two hours one song followed another with vertiginous volubility, full of caprice, dash, brio; the gypsies performing the most difficult things as if they were toying with them. Sacha indulged in *fioriturі* infinitely more difficult than Rhode's variations, while she took part in the conversation and asked one of my young travelling companions for a dress of *moire antique*, these being the only two French words she

knew. At last the rhythm became so inspiriting, so imperious, that dance was added to song as in an antique chorus; all shared in it, from the old woman, tanned like a mummy, who was rattling her skeleton form, to the little girl of eight, ardent, feverish, matured by sickly precocity, who danced as though she would dislocate her bones, so as not to be behind the grown women. As for the rascal of a guitar player, he fairly vanished in a whirlwind of rapidity, from which sprang arpeggios and shrill calls.

I confess that for one moment I dreaded lest the French "cancan," which is going around the world, had reached Rybinsk and that the evening would end like a play at the Variétés or the Palais-Royal, but it was not so; the dance of the gypsies is like that of the bayaderes. Sacha with her limp arms, the undulation of her torso and her dancing on one spot, recalled Amany and not Rigolboche. She and her companions seemed to be performing the Malapou or Wonder dance on the banks of the Ganges, before the altar of Siwa, the Blue god. Never did the Asiatic origin of gypsies seem to me more evident and more irrefutable.

It was time to return to the steamer, but the spectators and performers were so excited that the concert

continued in the street; the gypsies, taking our arms, walked in separate groups and sang a chorus with echoes, responses, and *decrescendo* effects, followed by sonorous outbursts of magical and supernatural effect; Oberon's horn, even when it is Weber which blows into its ivory shells, gives out no more suave, silvery, velvety, dreamy notes.

When we had crossed the gangway on to the steamer I turned to look back at the shore; on the edge of the quay the gypsies, grouped together in the moonlight, were waving their hands to us; a dazzling shower of notes, the last silver bombshell of these musical fireworks, rose to inaccessible heights, scattered its sparkling light upon the dark background of silence, and died out.

"The Nixie," which was well fitted to navigate the upper Volga, was not of sufficiently heavy tonnage to descend the river, — here very much wider and deeper, — with an increased number of passengers and a larger cargo. So we had been transshipped to the "Provorny," a steamer belonging to the same company, and of five hundred and fifty horse-power. Pails, each marked with one of the letters of the steamer's name, in Russian characters, hung under the bridge. The

deck cabin, forming a sort of kiosk, rose above the deck, above the steps leading to the main saloon, and enabled one to view the prospect whether in sunshine or in bad weather; and there I spent the greater part of my days.

Before the "Provorny" started I cast a glance at Rybinsk, to see how it looked in daylight, — not without some apprehension, for the sun is not as indulgent as the moon: it makes painfully plain what the orb of night softens with its gauze of azure and silver. Well, Rybinsk did not suffer too much from the light; its yellow, rose, and green houses of wood and brick, prettily topped its quay built of great irregular stones like a ruined cyclopean wall; the church, which in the moonlight had seemed to me of snowy whiteness, was painted apple green. I am fond of polychromy in architecture, but all the same that peculiar selection of colour astonished me. The church moreover, did not lack character, with its dome flanked by belfries and its four porticoes orientated like those of St. Isaac's. The steeple had the same queer swelling and narrowing which is noticed in the steeples of Belgium and Germany; but it raised very high its topmost finial, and if it did not satisfy the taste it tickled the eye, while its

silhouette on the horizon was anything but wearisome. The vessels at anchor near Rybinsk were mostly of large size, and of a peculiar form which I shall more than once have occasion to describe, for water traffic between this city, Nijni-Novgorod, Kazan, Saratof, Astrakhan, and other cities on the lower Volga is very considerable at this period of the year. Some were getting under way to descend the stream, others were at anchor or arriving, and the spectacle was altogether most interesting. The "Provorny" skilfully slid out from among this fleet and soon was carried along by the current.

The river was bounded by somewhat higher banks, especially on the left; but the character of the landscape did not change: we still had fir woods, aligning their great trunks like colonnades against the background of sombre verdure; villages of log-huts clustering around a church with a green dome; occasionally a nobleman's seat turned its quaint façade towards the river, or at least, standing sentry-like at the corner of a park, a belvedere or kiosk painted in brilliant colours; board walks climbing up the bank and leading to some dwelling; ground gullied by the rise and fall of the water; sandy beaches on which flocks of geese were

waddling round, and to which herds of oxen and cows came down to drink; endless variations of the same motive which the pencil would make more intelligible than does the pen.

Presently I caught sight of the Romanoff Convent; its crenelated, whitewashed walls make it look like a fortress, and must have protected it in former times against sudden assaults; for the treasures contained within the monasteries excited in times of trouble the cupidity of pillaging hordes. Above the walls arose great cedar trees spreading their branches horizontally covered with sombre, robust foliage. Cedars are cultivated with particular care at Romanoff, for it was under a cedar that the miraculous image venerated there was found.

At Yourevetz the wood for the fires was brought on board by women. Two poles arranged like shafts, supported a pile of logs, which were thrown into the bunkers of the steamer by couples of smart, robust peasant women, some of whom were occasionally pretty. The excitement of the work flushed their complexions with the rosy tint of health, and a slight breathlessness which parted their lips gave a glimpse of teeth as white as peeled almonds. Unfortunately the

faces of some of them were marked and pitted with small-pox, for vaccination is not very generally practised in Russia, no doubt owing to some popular prejudice. Their dress was very simple: a chintz skirt, of an old-fashioned pattern such as is to be met with sometimes in old country inns on the bed curtains and coverlets; a coarse linen chemise, a kerchief knotted under the chin, and that was all. The absence of shoes and stockings allowed one to admire fine and well turned ankles: Cinderella's slipper could easily have been put on by some of these barefooted girls. I noted with pleasure that the hideous fashion of fastening the skirt by a tape above the breasts, was indulged in only by the older women and the less pretty; the younger had their waist above their hips, as anatomy, hygiene, and common-sense demand.

It somewhat shocked my French notions of gallantry to see women carrying such heavy loads and doing the works of beasts of burden; but after all, this labour performed by them with an alacrity that dispels the notion of fatigue, brings them in a few kopecks and increases their own comfort and that of their families.

As we proceeded down the river we met a great number of boats like those we had seen anchored a

Rybinsk; they are of shallow draft, but in size little inferior to a merchant three-master. There is a peculiarity in their build which is not met with elsewhere: as in Chinese junks, the bow and stern are turned up; the pilot stands on a sort of platform, provided with a rail, the traceried work of which has been cut out with an axe. On the quarter deck are cabins looking like kiosks, with painted and gilded finials surmounted by vanes. But the most curious thing is the house for the horses; it is composed of two floors, supported by small posts; in the lower one are the stables, in the upper one the windlass itself; between the openings of the posts can be seen the horses harnessed three and three or four and four abreast, pulling on the capstan and winding up the tow cable, which is anchored away ahead in the river bed by a boat manned by eight or ten men. The number of horses thus installed on board of these vessels varies from one hundred to one hundred and fifty. They relieve each other and work, so to speak, watch and watch; while some are working the others are resting and the boat keeps on going, though slowly. The mast of the vessel, of immense height, is formed of four or five fir trunks, bound together, and recalls the

moulded pillars of Gothic cathedrals. The rope shrouds have wooden rounds for ratlins, fastened by cross lashings.

I have described somewhat in detail these great Volga boats and their peculiar fittings for they will ere-long disappear; in the course of a few years the horses will be replaced by tow-boats, the living power by mechanical power; the whole of this picturesque system will appear to be too complicated, slow and costly; everywhere the useful and necessary form will prevail. The men who man these boats wear queer hats; tall and brimless like bushel measures or stove pipes, and one is quite surprised not to see smoke coming out of the top.

These vessels reminded me of the great rafts of wood floating down the Rhine, which carry villages of huts and stores enough to furnish Gargantua's table, and even herds of oxen. The last pilot who was able to take charge of those great rafts died some years ago, and steam navigation has suppressed that barbaric and simple mode of transport.

Yaroslav, where we stopped, is connected with Moscow by a stage coach which deserves to be described. A vehicle, drawn by a drove of little horses, was waiting for travellers at the landing-place. It was

what is called in Russia a tarantass, that is to say, a carriage body placed upon two long bars, which connect the fore and the hind wheels; the flexibility of these bars answers instead of springs. The tarantass has this advantage that in case of a breakdown, it is easily repaired, and it resists the jolting of the worst roads. The carriage body, which is not unlike the old time litters, was hung with leather curtains, and the patients sat down sidewise as in busses. After having considered, with the respect it deserved, this sample of antediluvian carriage building, I ascended the slope of the quay and went into the town. The quay itself which is planted with trees, serves as a promenade, and at certain places is carried over arches which allow the lower streets and the torrents to reach the river.

The view from this point is very fine. Yaroslav lacks the characteristics of the old Russian cities, if anything can be called old in Russia, where lime-wash and paint obstinately conceal every trace of age. The porches of the church are filled with paintings in the archaic style of Mount Athos, but the outlines alone are old: whenever they begin to fade the colours of the flesh and the draperies are renewed, and the haloes are regilded.

Kostroma, where we stopped, offered nothing of importance, nothing noteworthy, at least to a traveller who could merely glance at it. The smaller Russian towns have a strikingly uniform appearance: — they are built in accordance with certain laws and certain needs, against which individual fancy does not even attempt to revolt. The lack or the rarity of stone increases the number of wooden and brick buildings, and architecture cannot, with such materials, attain a beauty interesting to the artist. As for the churches, the Greek ritual imposes upon them its hieratic forms, and they do not present the same variety of style as do our Western churches. Let us therefore return to the Volga, which is also monotonous, but varied in its unity like every great spectacle of Nature.

Innumerable birds, to say nothing of crows and ravens, so common in Russia, are flying across the stream. At every moment the steamer causes clouds of wild ducks to rise from the reeds of an islet or from the sand of a shoal; grebes and teal fly away, skimming over the water; in the heavens gulls, their white bellies and their pearly gray backs showing alternately, are indulging in capricious zigzags; falcons, kestrels, and buzzards are swooping around, watching

for prey; sometimes a fishing eagle darts straight down on some imprudent fish and rises again with vigorous flapping of wings, to perch farther away on the bank.

The long twilight of summer evenings again displayed its magic beauties. Shades of orange, citron, and chrysoprase coloured the sunset sky. On this background of splendour, the bank of the river, like the figures on the golden backgrounds of Byzantine ikons, showed in dark outline its trees, hillocks, houses, and distant churches; little banks of blue-black clouds made fleecy by the wind, scudded across a transverse zone; the sun, half sunk behind the wood which masked it, lighted innumerable spangles in the foliage. The brown waters of the river reflected in a darker tone this wonderful spectacle; sparks made visible by the growing darkness flashed like fire-works through the smoke of the steamer; and in the shadow along the banks shone like glow-worms or shooting stars, the lanterns of the fishermen on their way to haul up their nets.

As the water was very low the pilot did not dare to draw nearer the bank, for the darkness prevented his making out the buoys; so we came to anchor in the centre of the river, which is very wide in this place, so

wide, indeed, that we seemed to be in the centre of a great lake, the curving shores and points of promontories closing in the horizon on all sides.

The next day I spent in that busy idleness which is one of the charms of travelling. As I smoked my cigar I watched the banks of the river, that became more and more distant, for the Volga is here twice or thrice as wide as the Thames at London Bridge. Vessels hauled up by the horses on board, and others under sail, shoved past as they went up or down. The water traffic increased and made it plain that we were drawing near an important centre of trade. But if the day was quiet the evening brought about a most dramatic incident.

Our steamer had stopped for the night opposite a village or small town, the Russian name of which I have forgotten, and had moored alongside of a sort of pontoon made fast to the bank. My attention was soon attracted by loud voices and the tumultuous dialogue of a dispute. On the pontoon itself two men were quarrelling, disputing wildly; from insults they passed to acts; after having exchanged a few blows one of the men seized the other round the waist and quick as thought threw him into the river, splashing

the water almost in my face, for the man fell between the pontoon and the steamer, in a space not more than three to four feet in width. The eddying waters closed over him and I saw nothing reappear. There was a moment of dreadful anxiety, and everybody supposed the poor wretch was drowned, for it was impossible to fish him out from under the hull of the vessel, where no doubt the current had already carried him. Suddenly in the moonlight the water was seen to foam up near the bank and a human form emerged, shook itself and climbed the bank with rapid steps.

The man, who was an excellent swimmer, had dived under the paddle wheels, the box of which touched a neighbouring vessel. He could boast of having had a narrow escape. Meanwhile the would-be murderer instead of fleeing, was talking away with much motion of his arms, going and coming, sitting down on a bench at the door of the house, then rising and beginning all over again. Charles III maintained that the cause of every crime is a woman, and in judicial inquiries always asked: "Who is she?" The philosophical accuracy of this axiom was proved on this occasion: — a trap door opened and from within the pontoon arose a woman, who was probably the cause

of the trouble. Whether she was young and pretty I could not make out at that distance in the faint moonlight; besides a singular oscillation she indulged in prevented my making out her features. Calling to her aid all the saints of the Greek calendar she prostrated herself and rose to prostrate herself again; she performed signs of the cross after the Russian fashion, with amazing velocity, and murmured prayers broken by cries and sobs. It was uncommonly strange; she looked like an Aïssaoua working herself up. The police, fetched by the victim in person, at last arrived and after much discussion two soldiers in gray overcoats led away the culprit. For a short time I was able to follow the silhouette of the prisoner and the soldiers on the crest of the bank, who dared not treat him roughly, for he was a tchinovnik.

The anchor was weighed very early, and as daylight facilitated navigation we were not long in coming in sight of Nijni-Novgorod. It was one of those white, pearly, milky mornings on which objects seem to be veiled in a silver gauze; the sky, colourless, but suffused with veiled sunshine, rested on the gray hills and the waters of the stream, which resembled molten tin. Bonington's water-colours are full of such effects,

which might be believed beyond the powers of painting to reproduce, and which inborn colourists alone can attain.

An immense aggregation of vessels of all kinds covered the Volga, scarce leaving free space in the centre of the current for the passage of ships and steamers. The tall masts formed a sort of forest of lopped pines, their straight lines cutting firmly against the uniformly white background. The cool air of dawn unfolded the brightly coloured pennants and made the gilded vanes creak as they spun around. Some of these vessels laden with flour, were dusted all over with the white stuff, like millers. Others, on the contrary, showed plainly their bows painted green and their salmon-coloured top-sides.

We reached the landing place of the Company without damage or accident. It was quite astonishing to me, for though the river is as broad as an arm of the sea at this point, the water traffic is so great and the crowd of crafts so large that it seemed impossible to make one's way through the maze; but rudders act and vessels slide between one another as smartly as fishes.

Nijni-Novgorod stands upon a rise which, after the endless succession of plains we had traversed, had quite

the effect of a genuine mountain. The slope falls in rapid scarps down to the verdant quay; the abrupt zigzags thus formed are covered with brick ramparts, with a few remains of whitewash showing here and there; these crenelated walls form the boundary of the citadel or Kremlin, to use the local name. A huge, square tower rises on the summit; bulbous steeples with gilded crosses topping the walls, betoken the presence of a church within the fortress, and lower down are scattered the wooden houses on the quay itself. Great red buildings, with windows picked out with white, stretch in long symmetrical lines. The bright tones give brilliancy and vigour to the foreground and prevent the strictly regular architecture from wearying the eye.

At the top of the landing stairs there was a perfect rout of drojkis and telegas, fighting for passengers and luggage. Having managed, not without difficulty in repelling the izvochtchiks who mobbed me, I climbed into a drojki and set off in search of a lodging, a very difficult thing to find at the time of the fair. As I drove along the quay I glanced at the improvised stalls of the venders of loaves, ogourtsis, sausages, smoked fish, cakes, watermelons, apples, and other victuals

favoured by the common people. My carriage soon turned a corner and began climbing the road cut between two vast turfed slopes; for Nijni-Novgorod, as formerly was Oran before the engineers had filled up its picturesque precipices, is divided into two parts by a deep ravine. The walls of the Kremlin and the avenue of trees which forms a public promenade, crown the crest on the left; on the right slope a few houses rise, but they soon tire of escalading the declivity down which they seem to be sliding. After the ascent, which was abridged by the impetuousness of the Russian horses, which appear to be unable to go at a walk, we reached the summit of the plateau, on which extends a great square having in the centre a fountain with a cast-iron basin in most mediocre taste, and a church with green domes, surmounted by gilded crosses.

As I had ordered the man to drive me to the hotel most distant from the fair grounds, believing I should thus more easily obtain a room, he stopped before an inn at the corner of a square that looks towards the Kremlin. After a short delay and some conversation, Smyrnof, the hotel-keeper, condescended to admit me and the moujik carried in my trunk.

The room given me was bright, large and clean; it contained all that is indispensable to civilised travel, save that the bed was provided with but a single sheet, and a single mattress about as thick as a thin biscuit; but in Russia people affect, as regards beds, an Asiatic indifference, which, for the matter of that, I share, and the bed of Hotel Smyrnof was as good as any I could have got elsewhere.

While waiting for breakfast I looked out upon the square, my glance resting by preference upon the fountain, — not to admire its architecture, which as I have already said, is in the poorest possible taste, — but on account of the amusingly popular scenes of which a public fountain necessarily becomes the centre. The water carriers came to fill their barrels; they did so by plunging into the basin small pails at the end of a long stick, which they overset at the mouth of the barrel with remarkable quickness though they did spill about half the contents. There were also military convicts dressed in their gray overcoats, on water fatigue duty, guarded by two soldiers with fixed bayonets; moujiks, who filled wooden vases, broad at the bottom, narrow at the top, for household service. But never a woman did I see, while the German fountains

would have drawn together an assemblage of Gretchens, Nanerls, and Kaetchens gossiping away on the edge of the basin. In Russia women, even of the lowest classes, do not go out much, and it is men who perform most of the domestic functions.

After a plenteous breakfast served by waiters in black coats and white cravats, who were perhaps Mussulmans and whose English dress formed a perfect contrast with their characteristically Tartar faces, I hastened to descend to the fair grounds, situated at the foot of the city, on a sort of beach formed by the confluence of the Oka and the Volga. No guide was necessary to find the place, for everybody was going in that direction.

At the foot of the hill my attention was attracted by a small chapel; on the upper steps were bowing, with a mechanical movement of salutation, resembling that of wooden birds which mechanically raise and drop their heads, frightfully squalid beggars, regular human rags, which the funereal rag-picker had doubtlessly refused, through disgust, to pick up and cast into his basket; a few nuns wearing a tall hood of black velvet and a narrow, close-fitting serge dress, who shook before me an alms-box in which rattled the kopecks of the pre-

vious givers; these nuns are to be found wherever the congregating of the public leads them to hope for a successful quest. Five or six old women, who would have made Panzoust's Sybil appear young and pretty, completed the picture. A great number of small lighted tapers made the silver-gilt plates of the Ikonostas, which was further lighted by lamps, blaze in the interior like a mass of goldsmith work. I found it difficult to make my way into the small building, which was crowded with the faithful who were making the sign of the cross as hard as they could, and swinging like dervishes. A thread of water, no doubt possessing some miraculous property, that dropped into a stone shell placed against the wall like a holy-water vessel, struck me as being the special object of devotion in the place.

Public drojkis and telegas were flying along, making deep ruts in the mud and driving foot-passengers to the edge of the road. Sometimes a more elegant drojki came along, bearing two ladies showily dressed, with widespread crinolines, rouged and painted like idols, smiling to show their teeth and casting to right and left that courtesan glance which is the net with which they catch the unwary. The Nijni-Novgorod fair draws these birds of prey from all the evil places in

Russia and from farther away even ; whole cargoes of them come by steamer and a special quarter is reserved for them. The ogre of lust must have its prey of more or less fresh flesh. By one of those contrasts due to chance, that admirable worker of antitheses, the swift drojki often shaved a peaceful cart drawn by a little hairy horse bowing its head under its painted douga, and drawing a whole patriarchal group: the grandfather, the father, and the mother carrying a baby.

On that day — though the others were no doubt good also — the whisky monopoly must have taken in a large amount of cash ; a great number of drunkards were staggering along the board walks, or splashing about in the muddy road ; some, still more drunk and incapable of walking alone, got along with two friends that served as crutches. The faces of some were livid and those of others bloodshot and apoplectic-looking, according to their temperament or their degree of intoxication. One young fellow, overwhelmed by too frequent libations of vodka, had rolled from the sidewalk on to the sloping beach, through the piles of wood, bales, and heaps of filth ; he fell, he got up, he fell again, laughing idiotically and uttering inarticulate cries like a teriaki or a haschachin under the influence

of the drug. His hands full of earth, his face soiled with mud, his clothes torn and stained, he crawled on all fours, sometimes managing to reach the top of the quay, at other times again tumbling down into the river up to his waist, without noting the coldness of the water or being aware of the danger of drowning, which is the most disagreeable of all deaths for a drunkard.

The Russians have a proverb about glasses of whisky: "The first goes in like a post, the second like a falcon, the others flutter in like little birds." The individual whose stumbles I have just described, must have held a whole flock of little birds within his stomach! But it should be remembered it is not the satisfaction of the taste which the moujik expects from the drink, but intoxication and forgetfulness; he drinks glass after glass until he falls as if struck by lightning, and nothing is more frequent than to find on the board walks outstretched bodies that might easily be taken for dead men.

The constantly growing density of the crowd kept me for some time in front of a pretty church in which the German rococo united in quaint fashion with the Byzantine style; on the red background stood out ovae, volutes, foliage, capitals like curly cabbages, draped

brackets, flower-pots and other flamboyant fantasies, picked out in white, the whole business surmounted by bulbous belfries most ornamental in aspect; it was like the roof of a mosque upon a Jesuit church.

Having taken a few steps farther in the midst of a perfectly incredible crowd of people and vehicles, shoved and elbowed as on the Champs-Élysées when there are fireworks, I managed to reach the entrance to the bridge that leads to the fair grounds; to venture upon it was both difficult and perilous, but happily true travellers are like great captains — they go anywhere, not with a flag, but with a glass in their hand.

At the entrance to the bridge rose tall masts laden with banners of all colours, blazoned by some extravagant fancy, like the Venetian standards which are erected for festivals in France. On some of the banners the well-meaning artist had intended, although he had not succeeded, to represent the Emperor and the Empress. Other banners were adorned with the double-headed eagle, St. George brandishing his lance, Chinese dragons, leopards, unicorns, griffins, and the whole menagerie of the old Bestiaires. A light breeze which made them flutter, altered in quaint fashion, as

the folds opened unexpectedly, the images represented upon them.

The bridge over the Oka was a bridge of boats on which were laid beams and board walks. The crowd filled it from one side to the other, and in the centre the carriages dashed along at a speed which nothing moderates in Russia and which does not involve accidents, thanks to the extreme skill of the drivers, who are, besides, helped by the docility of the foot passengers in drawing aside. The sound was as if the car of Capanea were passing over the brazen bridge. Both sides of the river disappeared under the immense multitude of boats and the inextricable maze of rigging. Perched on the high saddles of their little horses the Cossacks charged with the police of the fair, and known from afar by their long lances as they came, rode gravely among the drojkis, telegas, vehicles of all sorts and foot passengers of both sexes. But there was not a human sound; anywhere else such a vast multitude would have given forth a mighty murmur, a tumultuous clatter like that of the sea; a vapour of noise would have floated above that prodigious congregation of individuals. But crowds composed of Russian elements are always silent.

At the end of the bridge, hung signs of acrobats and paintings of freaks, coloured in the most barbaric manner; boa constrictors, bearded women, giants, dwarfs, strong men and three-headed calves, — which to me had an exotic and peculiar character, thanks to the gigantic inscriptions in Russian letters. Small stalls for the sale of the usual cheap trifles and small wares, of holy images, ridiculously low priced, of cakes, green apples, sour milk, beer, kwass, rose to right and left of the planked causeway; at the back of them stuck out the ends of the joists which had not been sawed off, so that they looked like baskets the ribs of which have not yet been filled in by the basket-maker.

The boot-dealers' stall with their shoes, boots, and felt socks, attracted my attention as being peculiar to the country. There were the daintiest women's shoes of white felt, adorned with red or blue stitching, not unlike the shoes called "sorties-de-bal," which dancing girls put on over their thin satin shoes to go to the carriage which awaits them: Cinderella alone could have put her foot into them.

The fair at Nijni-Novgorod is a city in itself. The long streets cut each other at right angles and end in

squares with a fountain in the centre. The wooden houses that border them are composed of a ground floor, containing a shop and a store-room, and an overhanging story supported by posts, in which the dealer and his clerks sleep; this overhanging story and the posts upon which it rests, form in front of the stalls a show-place and a continuous covered gallery; the bales which are unloaded in front may, in case of rain, be put under shelter there, and the passers-by, safe from the carriages, talk over what they want, or satisfy their curiosity without running any greater risk than that of being elbowed.

The streets sometimes end in the plain. A most curious thing it is to see outside the fair grounds, the camps of carts, with the half wild horses unharnessed and fastened to the side boards, the drivers sleeping on a bit of coarse stuff or fur. Unfortunately the costumes are more ragged than picturesque; although they do not lack a certain amount of characteristic savageness, there are no bright colours, save here and there a pink shirt; ochre, sienna, Cassel earth, and bitumen, would suffice to paint these things; something, however, can be made out of the smock-frocks, the tulupes, the bands crossed around the legs, the esparto shoes, the

yellow bearded faces, and the little thin horses whose bright eyes shine upon you through the long hair of their wild manes.

In one of these camps were Siberians who dealt in furs; the skins, which had been only roughly prepared, so as to keep, were lying pell-mell on mats, the fur inside, without the least attempt to show them off to advantage. To the layman it looked like a sale of rabbit skins. The dealers did not look any better than their goods, and yet the value of the latter amounts to enormous sums. Arctic beaver, Zibeline marten, and blue Siberian fox skins fetch amazing prices which would startle Western people. A blue fox pelisse is worth ten thousand roubles or forty thousand francs. A collar of beaver, with white hair showing above the brown fur, costs one thousand roubles. I possess a small cap of beaver which in Paris would not fetch fifteen francs, but which caused me to be well thought of in Russia where people are judged somewhat by their furs; it cost seventy-five silver roubles. Innumerable points which we do not notice increase or diminish the value of fur: if the animal was killed during winter and has its winter down, the price is higher, for the fur is warmer and will keep out greater

cold; the nearer the animal has been killed to the Arctic regions, the softer is the fur. The furs of our temperate countries become insufficient when the thermometer falls to four below zero: they do not retain sufficiently long the heat which they receive in the apartments.

A characteristic industry of Russia is that of the trunk makers. In the making of trunks the imitation of the West gives way to the pure Asiatic taste. There are always many trunk shops in Nijni-Novgorod and it was in them that I stayed longest. Charming indeed are the boxes of all sizes, painted with bright colours and with ornaments of silver or gold varnish, covered with blue, red, or green spangles, with metallic reflections, ornamented with gilt nails, symmetrically arranged, trellised with thongs of white or buff leather, strengthened with steel or copper corner pieces, and closed with artlessly complicated locks. They are exactly such as one imagines would be the trunks of an Ameer or a Sultana on their travels. When in use these trunks are provided with a cover of strong linen, which is taken off on arrival; they then serve as chests of drawers, no doubt to the great regret of their owners, who would prefer civilised

magnificence to this lovely, barbaric luxuriousness. I regret that I did not buy a certain painted box, varnished like the mirror of an Indian princess; but I was ashamed to put my wretched clothes in a casket which had been made for cashmeres and brocades.

With this exception one finds at the Nijni-Novgorod fair mostly what is called in trade "l'article Paris." This is flattering to our patriotism, but regrettable from the point of view of picturesqueness: one does expect to find, after travelling thirty-three hundred miles, something else than the stock of Parisian bazaars. These various trifles are greatly admired, for the matter of that, but they do not form the serious side of the fair; at which an enormous business is done, sales of ten thousand cases of tea for instance, which remain on the river, or five or six vessels laden with grain, worth several millions, or else a quantity of furs to be delivered at such a price, and which are not shown. The great movement of business is therefore so to speak invisible. Tea-houses furnished with a fountain for ablutions and intended for the Mussulmans, serve as a meeting-place and stock-exchange to the contracting parties. Jets of vapour hiss from the samovar; moujiks, wearing red or white shirts, move around with trays in

their hands; long-bearded merchants in blue caftans, seated opposite Asiatics wearing black astrakhan lambskin caps, drain their saucers full of the hot infusion with a small piece of sugar between their teeth, with as much indifference as if immense interests were not being discussed in these apparently idle conversations. In spite of the diversity of races and dialects, Russian is the only language spoken in business transactions, and over and above the confused murmur of talk floats, perceptible even to the stranger, the sacred word: *Roubl-Serebrom* (silver rouble).

The various faces in the crowd excited my curiosity more than the sight of the shops. The Tartars, with prominent cheek bones, wrinkled eyes, concave noses such as we imagine the moon's profile to have, thick lips, yellow complexion turning grayish, and close shaved temples, were to be met with in great numbers, with their little piqué chintz caps placed on top of the skull, their brown caftans and their metal plated belts. The Persians were easily known by their long oval faces, their great arched noses, their brilliant eyes, thick black beards and noble Oriental physiognomy; one could not have helped noticing them even though attention had not been drawn to them by their conical lambskin caps,

their striped silk gowns and their cashmere sashes. A few Armenians in tattered tunics with hanging sleeves; wasp-waisted Circassians wearing a sort of low buck-skin cap, stood out in the crowd; but what I was eagerly looking for, especially when I reached the particular quarter where tea is sold, was the Chinese. For a moment I thought my wish would be fulfilled, as I saw the shops with up-curved roofs, fretted trellises, with smiling figures on the acroters, which might justify the fancy that one had been transported by the touch of a wand into a city of the Celestial Empire. But on the threshold of the shops and behind the counters I could see none but kindly Russian faces: there was not a single pleated pigtail, not a single face with oblique eyes and eye-brows in the shape of circum-flexes, not a single hat in the form of a stew-pan cover, not a single blue or violet silk gown; there were no Chinese at all. I do not know exactly why I should have expected to find them, but I had supposed I should meet at Nijni-Novgorod a certain number of these strange beings, who, as far as we are concerned, exist upon screens and porcelain vases only. Not having thought of the enormous distance between Nijni-Novgorod and the Chinese frontier, I had, like a

perfect fool, thought that the merchants of the Middle Empire themselves brought their teas to the fair. The well-known repugnance of the Chinese to leave their own country and to mingle with the outer barbarians, should have prevented my indulging in such a fancy, but it had taken such a hold upon me that in spite of the evidence of my own eyes I asked for the Chinese repeatedly. None had come for three years; on this occasion a single one had made his appearance, but in order to avoid the importunate curiosity of the people, he had put on European dress. One was expected to come to the next fair, though it was not very certain. These explanations were very kindly given me by a merchant from whom I bought some tea, but on learning I was a French writer he insisted on my accepting some Pekoe, in which he mixed one or two handfuls of white tipped flowers, and in addition presented me with a tablet or brick bearing on one side an inscription in Chinese characters, and on the other the red seal of the Kiaktha custom-house, the uttermost Russian post. The brick is formed of an enormous quantity of leaves compressed together and reduced to the smallest volume. It looks like a plate of bronze or green porphyry. This is the tea which the Manchu Tartars make use

of when travelling across the steppes and with which they make that sort of butter soup described by Father Huc in his interesting work.

Not far from the Chinese quarter, for that is the name given to it at Nijni-Novgorod, are the shops of Eastern wares. I cannot describe the elegance, the majesty of the Effendis in silk caftans with cashmere sashes, bristling with poniards, who with the most disdainful coolness sat enthroned upon their divans in the midst of a wealth of brocades, velvets, silks, flowered stuffs, silver and gold gauzes, Persian carpets, scarlet cloths, no doubt embroidered by the fingers of captive Peris; mouth-pieces for pipes, narghilehs of Khorassan steel, amber chaplets, vials of essences, stools inlaid with mother of pearl, slippers embroidered with gold arabesques — enough to send a colourist into ecstasies.

I was beginning to weary of wandering along these endless streets bordered by shops and stalls; I was getting hungry and I yielded to the invitation which Nikita's sign sent me from the other side of the river; Nikita being the Collot or the Véfour of Nijni. Moujiks standing upon the axles of the wheels on which they had carried long logs, were galloping across the bridge,

trying to pass each other; their coolness, their boldness, and their gracefulness were wonderful; the speed at which they went made their shirts blow out like chlamydes; braced on their feet, their arms outstretched, their hair flying in the wind they looked like Greek heroes, and one might have sworn it was a chariot race at the Olympic games.

Nikita's Restaurant is a wooden house with great windows, behind which show the broad leaves of the hothouse plants with which every establishment with any pretence to fashion must be filled, for the Russians are very fond of verdure. Waiters in English dress served me with sturgeon soup, beefsteak and horse-radish, salmi of grouse — the grouse is unavoidable — chicken *à la chasseur*, a jelly of some kind with too much fish glue in it, an exquisitely delicate ice-cream flavoured with almonds, the whole washed down with iced seltzer water and a fairly good claret. What I most enjoyed, however, was the liberty to smoke, for it is expressly forbidden to do so within the fair, the only fire tolerated there being that of the lamps burning before the holy images with which every shop is adorned.

Having finished dinner I went back to the fair, still

expecting to find something new. A feeling akin to that which keeps people at the Opera balls in spite of the heat, the dust, and the fatigue, prevented my returning to the hotel. After having traversed a few lanes I reached a square on which arose on one hand a church and on the other a mosque. The church was surmounted by a cross, the mosque by a crescent; the two symbols shone peacefully in the air of evening, gilded by an impartial or indifferent ray of the sun, which is about one and the same thing. The two forms of worship seem to live like good neighbours, for religious tolerance is widely practised in Russia, which counts even idolaters among its subjects,—the Parsees who worship fire.

The door of the Orthodox church was open and evening prayer was being said in it. It was not easy to enter, for the compact multitude filled the building as completely as liquid fills a vase. Yet by using my elbows I managed to make my way in. The interior of the church looked like a golden furnace: forests of candles and constellations of chandeliers made the gilding of the Ikonostas flame again as the metallic reflections mingled with the rays of light in sudden flashes and dazzling phosphorescence. This mass of

light formed in the upper part of the cupola a dense red mist into which ascended the glorious chants of the Greek liturgy sung by the popes and repeated in a low voice by the congregation. The bowings called for by the ritual made the whole of that assembly of believers bend and rise at the prescribed moment with a regularity comparable to that of a well executed military manœuvre.

After a few moments I went out, for I already felt the perspiration streaming over my body as if I were in a vapour bath. I should much have liked to visit the mosque also, but it was not Allah's hour.

What was I to do with the remainder of my evening? A drojki passing by I hailed it, and without asking me where I wanted to go the driver started his horse at a gallop: that is quite the way the izsvocht-chicks do; they rarely inquire whither they are to take their fare. A *na leva* or *na prava* tells them at need which way to go. My driver after having traversed the bridge that leads to Nikita's, began to gallop across the country along rudimentary roads marked only by horrid ruts; I let him go on, for I took it for granted he would drive me somewhere, and indeed the intelligent fellow had bethought himself that a gentleman of

my kidney could not have intended to go anywhere at that hour of the evening, but to the quarter reserved to the tea, music, and pleasure-houses.

Night was falling. We traversed with terrific velocity rough ground with many pools of water, in a penumbra through which partially built houses showed like skeletons. At last lights began to pierce the darkness with red points; bursts of music reached my ears, telling of orchestras. We had got to the place. From the house, with open doors and wretched windows, issued the drone of balaleïkas mingled with guttural cries; strange silhouettes showed against the windows; on the narrow plank platform staggered intoxicated shadows and showed extravagant toilettes, alternately lost in darkness and brilliantly lighted.

If the Cythera of antiquity had for a girdle the azure waters of the Mediterranean, the Muscovite Cythera was surrounded by a girdle of mud, which I did not care to meddle with. In the squares, at the crossings of streets, the waters, owing to the flatness of the ground, collected and formed deep quagmires in which the wheels of carriages, stirring up the most noisome stenches, sank up to the axles. Caring little to be upset in such a quagmire, amid a block of half

submerged drojkis, I ordered my driver to turn around and to take me back to the Smyrnof Hotel. By his amazed glance I understood he looked upon me as an individual of not much account, and as an absurdly rigorous person; but he obeyed and I wound up my evening by walking round the Kremlin. The moon had risen and at times one of its silvery beams revealed under the shadow of the trees two people embracing each other closely or walking slowly along hand in hand.

The next day I spent in visiting the upper part of Nijni-Novgorod. From a belvedere placed at the outer angle of the Kremlin and overlooking a beautiful public garden outspread on the hilly slope, with cool masses of verdure, and sinuous yellow sanded walks, one has a wonderful view, a limitless panorama. Through undulating plains which turn lilac, pearl gray and steel blue in the distance, the Volga rolls in great curves, now dark, now bright, according as it reflects the sky or the shadow of a cloud. On the nearer bank of the river I could scarce make out the few houses, looking smaller than toy villages manufactured in Nuremberg. The vessels at anchor near the shore resembled a Lilliputian fleet. Everything was lost, effaced and swallowed up

in the serene, azure, somewhat sad immensity which recalled the infinite expanse of the sea. It was a genuinely Russian horizon.

There was nothing more for me to see and I started back for Moscow, freed from the obsession which had led me to undertake this long trip. No longer did the demon of travel whisper in my ear: "Nijni-Novgorod!"

A Trip to Belgium and Holland

A TRIP TO BELGIUM AND HOLLAND

BEFORE I enter upon the account of my glorious expedition, I deem it my duty to apprise the universe that herein will be found neither lofty political reflections, nor theories of railway construction and maintenance, nor complaints of Belgian literary piracy, nor dithyrambics in honour of the millions of money always forthcoming for any undertaking in that happy land, a true industrial Eldorado. I shall speak only of what I shall have seen with my own eyes, that is with my glasses or my telescope, for I should fear that my eyes alone might deceive me. I shall borrow nothing from guide-books or from works on history or geography, and that is so rare a merit that I deserve credit for it.

This is the first voyage I have ever undertaken, and I have returned from it convinced that the writers of accounts of travel have never even set foot in the countries they describe; or, at least, granting they have visited them, that they had their story ready prepared, as was the case with the Abbé de Vertot's siege.

Now, if any curious reader desires to learn the reason why I went to Belgium rather than anywhere else, I am quite willing to tell it to him, for I have nothing to hide from so respectable a person as my reader. The notion came into my mind in the Louvre Museum, as I was walking through the Rubens Gallery. The sight of his handsome women, with full forms, of those lovely and healthy bodies, of those mountains of rosy flesh with their wealth of golden hair, filled me with the desire to compare them with their living prototypes. Further, the heroine of my forthcoming novel being fair, I wished, as the saying is, to kill two birds with one stone. These, then, were the motives which impelled a worthy and simple-minded Parisian to run away for a brief season from his beloved gutter of the Rue Saint-Honoré. I was not bound to the East, like Father Enfantin, in search of the free woman; I was on my way to the North in quest of the fair-haired female; yet I was scarcely more successful than the venerable Father Enfantin, ex-god and now engineer.

You are aware of the difficulty a Parisian experiences in dragging himself away from Paris, and how deeply the human plant strikes its roots between the cracks of

the paving stones. It took me quite three months to make up my mind to that fortnight's trip. I packed and unpacked a dozen times, and I secured a seat in every stage-coach; I cannot tell how many times I bade farewell to the three or four people who, I fancied, might possibly miss me. My feelings were harrowed by the repetition of these pathetic scenes, and I was in a fair way to ruin my digestion by dint of drinking stirrup-cups. Finally, one fine morning, having exchanged a rather large number of five-franc pieces for a very small number of gold pieces, I took myself by the collar and kicked myself out of my own house, ordering the friend whom I left in it to fire upon me as he would at a mad wolf if I ventured to return before the lapse of three weeks, and forthwith I proceeded to the fatal Rue du Bouloi, where the coach was standing.

My father, who accompanied me to the stage, behaved admirably on this tremendous occasion. He did not press me to his breast and he did not give me his blessing, any more than he gave me anything else. I also behaved in the manliest fashion; I did not shed tears; I did not kiss the soil of the fair France I was about to leave, and I even hummed gaily enough, and

as much out of tune as usual, a little air which stands me in the way of my "lilli bulero" and "tiralirala."

The coach started, and, on reaching the Villette gate, I could say, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, — "Farewell, Paris; city of mud, smoke, and noise."

Wretched indeed are the approaches to the Queen of cities. There surely cannot be anything meaner than the houses, the sides of which have been laid bare by the demolition of their neighbours, and which still preserve the blackened imprint of the chimney flues, rags of wall-paper and traces of half effaced paint; the waste ground intersected by pools of water and flecked with hillocks of refuse. It was especially on my return, when I had got accustomed to the cleanliness and neat appearance of Flemish towns that this degradation and filth struck me most forcibly.

Let me not dwell upon this theme, but rather allow the reader's imagination to evoke a pleasant scene — that of our first stop for dinner. Let him figure to himself a long table on the handsome white cloth of which blaze constellations of plates and dishes; a couple of enthusiastic travellers and a dozen others absolutely practical, who, with their napkins fastened round their necks, look like Greek heroes with marble

chlamys, a resemblance strengthened by the warlike fashion in which they brandish their weapons of offence.

But, O ye treacherous keepers of hostels, to whom as to women might be applied Shakespeare's words: "Fickle as the wave," Machiavellian Palforios, double-faced hosts, do you suppose that, maugre my apparent innocence, I did not fathom your diabolical invention, intended to make starving travellers lose ten of the precious twenty minutes granted them by the implacable conductor for the purpose of taking their meal?

I denounce to the ambulatory and tourist world this execrable trick, the more to be feared that it presents itself in the form of a fine tureen in thick china, with blue lines, filled with a soup so abundantly covered with fatty disks that it dispels all distrust. But that soup must have been cooked in the devil's own pot on top of a volcano instead of a kitchen range, for it is many degrees hotter than molten lead and keeps on boiling when served in the plate.

The battle between the inkeeper and the travellers, called dinner, having come to an end, not wholly to my disadvantage, thanks to my expeditious ferocity, we were returned to our cage and went off at a gallop.

The trees kept on flying by, to the right and left; the rosy tints on the horizon turned violet; the landscape became more indistinct, and the sun, veiled in mist, looked like a dropped egg, a most humiliating thing for an orb to which M. de Malfilâtre addressed an ode that d'Alembert declared admirable.

The fall in the temperature and the cold of the growing night covered the window of the coach with a pearly dew that streamed down abundantly and that prevented my making out the various objects, already rendered indistinct by the shades of evening, while puffs of icy cold wind compelled me to draw my head in every time I peered out, just like a snail whose horns are touched; I therefore gave up playing the observer, and settled down in my corner as comfortably as I could.

A violent jolt awoke me, and I heard the coach rumbling over what seemed to be a sort of boarded floor. I lowered the window and made out in the darkness another more opaque and more intense obscurity, like black velvet on black cloth; it was Péronne, which we had been entering for the past half-hour through a complicated and most discouraging series of gates and drawbridges, that greatly contributed

to make one understand its impregnability. As we drove across a sort of square, I caught a glimpse, thanks to a glimmer of two or three stars that had put their heads out of a cloud attic, of the faint outlines of a four-sided tower. And that was all I managed to see. After rattling for some time longer through narrow streets, the houses in which shook as the lumbering coach passed by, we emerged through as many gates as we had passed on entering.

On leaving Péronne I fell asleep again, and when I reopened my eyes the gray light of day was beginning to show. We were not far from Cambrai, and the appearance of the country was completely different. The temperature was growing markedly colder, and I looked at every instant for the coming of Polar bears and ice-floes. It was about here that I first understood that I was no longer in Pantin or Bagnolet. The French type tended to disappear and was replaced by the Flemish. This is also the latitude in which the use of shoes and stockings begins to be unknown, and where people are so careful to wash their houses that they never wash their faces.

What can I tell you about Cambrai, save that it is a fortified city of which François Salignac de Lamothe

Fénelon was formerly bishop, and from which he drew his appellation of the Swan of Cambrai, by opposition to Bossuet's the Eagle of Meaux? As far as swans go, I only saw, on passing through, a splendid flock of geese, some white and others spotted with gray.

A fortified city, and fortified by Vauban to boot, is the ugliest and most dismal place in the world. Imagine three zigzagging brick walls forming endless angles, and separated by ditches full of reeds, rushes, yellow water-lilies and potatoes, and, generally speaking, all manner of things, except water, of course; three walls with no other ornaments than embrasures for guns, with shutters painted green, and the whole three of them exactly alike. The tender rose colour of the bricks and the peaceful green of the shutters, opened every morning so that the guns may take the air, produce the most singular and pastoral effect possible.

I flatter myself that I am a profound ignoramus as regards military architecture and strategy, and I confess that these much bepraised fortifications seemed to me fitter for the growing of vines or wall peaches than for the defence of a city. What I want are donjons, round towers and square, superimposed ramparts, battlements, barbicans, draw-bridges, portcullises and all

the apparatus of ancient fortresses; lunettes, cunettes, casemates, bastions, counterscarps, and demi-lunes are not much to my fancy; like Mascarille I prefer full moons.

I saw nothing noteworthy in Cambrai, where we stopped for breakfast, save a huge *Presse* poster and another of more unpretentious dimensions which conveyed to the inhabitants of the place the information that there would be performed in the theatre of Cambrai, upon that evening, the splendid play entitled "Edward in Scotland," widely admired in Paris and which would be presented by actors of the first rank. Also, a rather handsome tower on the right of the road, which I had not time to examine.

I was struck by the fact that nearly all the streets were sanded with blue dust; the passage of three or four coal carts scattering, as they went, a fine powder, explained the peculiarity. I had already my pencil in my hand to note that "In these distant and hitherto undescribed regions the soil, owing to strange phenomenon, is blue." Many travellers' notes rest on no sounder basis of fact.

Well, to be done with Cambrai, here is the aspect of the place, which I kindly give for the benefit of

amateurs of local colour: the ground, blue; the sky, the tint of dull Nile water; the houses, the shade of faded rose leaves; the roofs, episcopal purple; the inhabitants, light pumpkin; the women, straw yellow.

When Cambrai was left behind the country assumed a character entirely different from that I had seen hitherto; the North began to make itself felt, and the first puffs of its icy breath already struck on my face. I had left Paris in my shirt-sleeves with the thermometer up at ninety; within twenty hours I found that my virtue was insufficient as a garment, and I carefully wrapped myself up in my cloak.

Never have I seen anything more charming and blooming than the picture unfolded before me on leaving that ugly old town, black with coal dust and covered with a pall of smoke.

The heavens were of a very pale blue turning to a light lilac as it melted into the band of rosy reflections made by the rising sun on the edge of the horizon. The land rose and fell in soft undulations, breaking the monotony of the lines, almost always flat in this part of the country, and narrow streaks of azure harmoniously bounded the view on either side of the road. Great fields of opium poppies pearly with dew rustled

softly under the breath of morning, as the shoulders of a young girl shiver as she emerges from the bath. The flower of the opium poppy is almost the same as that of the iris: of a delicate blue with white predominating. These great stretches of azure looked like pieces of sky spread out to dry by some celestial laundress. The heavens themselves had the appearance of an overset field of poppies, if the comparison proves more satisfactory to my reader. The transparency, delicacy, and lightness of the tone were such that it might have been taken for a water-colour by Turner; yet there were but two prevailing tints, pale blue and pale lilac, with here and there a few bands of that grass-green called Veronese green by painters, two or three streaks of ochre and golden lights tipping distant clumps of trees. Nothing could be more exquisite; it was one of those effects that neither painting nor writing can reproduce and which are felt rather than seen.

As we advanced the view became more extensive and new prospects opened up on all sides. Little brick houses, hidden in the foliage and red as apis set in moss, peeped inquisitively between the branches to watch us pass by. Pools of water flashed under the

slanting rays of the sun, and the slate roofs of church steeples shimmered suddenly like silver spangles; wide openings allowed the eye to travel over meads of the loveliest spring green imaginable, and revealed innumerable calm and peaceful views of the most familiarly Flemish character and most tender in their charm. Especially were there little paths, real truants' foot-paths, that joined the road after running by the side of some wall or hawthorn hedge, which had the most engaging, wild, and uncultivated look in the world, and that caused me infinite delight. I should have liked to get out of the coach and to wander down one of these paths that must have unquestionably led into the pleasantest and most picturesquely rustic spots. You could never guess how many idylls in the manner of Gessner these meandering ways led me to compose; into what oceans of cream my thoughts were led by them, and what quantities of spinach with sugar they induced my imagination to cut fine.

We frequently traversed hamlets, villages, and small towns built wholly of brick, delightfully clean, and so daintily constructed, by comparison with the hideous huts around Paris, that I could not recover from the surprise they filled me with.

All these houses, striped red and white, covered with designs formed by the various ways of laying the bricks, with their green shutters, brightly painted and varnished, their projecting cornices, their violet slate roofs, their covered wells festooned with hops or Virginia creeper, recall the towns in painted wood manufactured in Nuremberg for Christmas presents for children. Of course, they are larger, but otherwise identical, and one of these villages might have been presented to young Gargantua for a plaything.

I shall say nothing of Bouchain, which is so well walled a city that I passed it by without perceiving it. With your permission we shall skip a few relays and reach Valenciennes.

It was as we approached this city that began a practical joke which lasted throughout our trip: every fifteen minutes we crossed a stream or a provincial water-course, and, like intelligent travellers, we inquired of some more or less stupid Walloon: —

"What is the name of this river, sir?"

"The Scheldt, sir."

"Ah! thank you."

A little farther a new river would appear, and we would again ask the same question.

"Would you have the kindness to tell me what this river is, Mr. Walloon?"

"Certainly; it is the Scheldt, canalised."

"I am very glad to hear it, sir; canals are one of the blessings of civilisation, and I love them; but one should not have too many of them."

The Walloon would remain in the calm and unpretentious attitude that becomes a man conscious of his own rectitude; apparently he did not grasp the meaning of the latter part of the sentence.

"Now, away yonder, where I see boats with red sails and apple-green rudders?"

"That is the Scheldt, sir; the Scheldt itself."

We had become so thoroughly used to that reply, that when we arrived on the shores of the sea, at Ostend, my companion refused steadily to believe that it was the ocean, and he maintained stoutly, *unguibus et rostro*, that it was still the Scheldt in the form of a canal.

I entered Valenciennes full of thoughts of embroideries and lace which I could not get rid of; I wished the town had been openworked and traceried from end to end, and most painfully surprised was I at seeing but few specimens of Valenciennes lace. The sil-

houette of Malines unconsciously stands out in my mind in the form of innumerable little filaments, exceedingly tenuous, on which are embroidered ideally delicate flowers and figures after the manner of Gothic tracery, the work of fairies. Alençon is of necessity Alençon lace, and it is most regretfully that I tolerate houses of stone and plaster in it. Every city famous for some special product appears in my imagination under the figure of that product, but innumerable are the disappointments to which such fancies expose a trusting tourist.

For the rest, Valenciennes is a pretty little town, with a few Renaissance houses, a town-hall of the early part of Louis XIV's reign, and a church in the Florentine taste. It was at Valenciennes that I first saw on the walls the following formidable inscription, which I found repeated on every tenth house to the end of my wondrous Odyssey: —

VERKOOPT MEN DRANKEN

which means, in good Flemish: *Here is drink sold.* It was in Valenciennes also that I received in exchange for the money I paid out, astounding small change in cents and leaden pieces marked with a crowned W,

which the devil himself could make nothing of, and that I was handed a hemp straw instead of a match wherewith to light my cigar.

In the main street of Valenciennes I beheld the one and only Rubens I came across in the whole course of my trip in search of golden hair and voluptuous forms. It was a stout kitchen wench, with huge hips and amazingly large breasts, who was quietly sweeping the gutter, never for an instant suspecting that she constituted a most authentic Rubens. This find aroused in me hopes that proved subsequently absolutely deceitful.

Valenciennes is the last French town; after traversing a few leagues more we should reach the frontier; I therefore carefully cleaned my glasses in order to lose no part of the wonderful things I was about to behold.

We at last reached a place where we were bidden to descend from the coach, and where our luggage was transferred to a sort of shed to undergo examination. We had left France. I was greatly surprised at not feeling violently moved. I had fancied that a heart at all patriotic would at least beat very much faster on leaving the adored soil of the Fatherland; but I

found out for myself that this was not the case. I had also entertained the belief that frontiers were marked with little dots and coloured with a blue or red line, as may be seen on maps; here again I was mistaken.

A café, yclept "Café de France," and adorned with a cock that looked like a camel, marked the spot where the *French* territory ended. A tavern, flaunting "The Belgian Lion" for a sign, indicated the other spot where began the dominions of His Majesty King Leopold. The tavern sign did not give me a very high opinion of the existing condition of art in the blessed land of literary piracy. As a general rule, if you want to paint a Belgian lion, do not take for model a lion, but an adolescent poodle; dress it up in a pair of nankeen breeches, a tow wig, and a pipe in its mouth. Then you shall have a Belgian lion that will look particularly well above the legend: — *Verkoopt men dranken.*

I amused myself, while the customs officers were rummaging in my valise, travelling repeatedly from France to Belgium and from Belgium to France. Once, indeed, I had one foot in France and the other in Belgium. But, to my shame be it spoken, my right foot, that stood on French soil, did not in the least

degree tingle patriotically. My comrade, coming up from his side, asked me whether I did not intend to kiss the sacred soil of the Fatherland before getting into the coach again. I sought in vain a spot where I might accomplish this pious purpose; it was devilishly muddy, and I was compelled to omit this indispensable formality.

While waiting for the completion of the customs inspection, the pair of us, thirsting for local colour, dashed into the glorious tavern of "The Belgian Lion," and poured into ourselves more beer than we could reasonably contain; a perfect deluge of faro, lambick, and white Louvain beer, enough to float Noah's ark. We also drank Belgian coffee, Belgian gin, and smoked Belgian tobacco. In a word, we assimilated Belgium in every way we could think of.

Mons is a true Flemish town; its streets are cleaner than the floors of French rooms; they look as though they had been waxed and painted. All the houses, without a single exception, are painted from top to bottom in the most incredible colours; some are white; others ashen blue; others again light fawn, rose, apple-green, frightened-mouse gray, and innumerable other cheerful shades unknown in our own land. Crow-

foot gables are frequently seen; they produce a quaintly agreeable effect.

I got a mere glimpse of the cathedral at the end of a street; it did not strike me as particularly fine. On the other hand, when the coach stopped, I had the leisure to examine a most fancifully charming and bright church, with innumerable belfries, finials and pot-bellied minarets, that gave it a thorough Russian aspect. It looked like no end of cup and balls and pepper-pots symmetrically arranged on the roof, or big apples spitted on a spit. That is a grotesque image of it, but pray imagine a building delightfully capricious and most picturesque in appearance; a joyous, triumphant church, better suited to weddings than to funerals, and fantastically ornamented in the maddest, most flowery and most comical style of the reign of Louis XIII; a mass at once squat and slender; its heavy lightness and light heaviness producing the finest effect.

Unless I am mistaken this church is dedicated to Saint Elizabeth, but it may be that it is to Saint Peter or Saint Jude, but what I am sure of is that it is on the right of the main street coming from Paris.

At Mons I purchased local colour cakes: little round cakes of pastry very liberally sugared, and resembling

somewhat the Italian *paste frole*, though neither the scent nor the taste of them is as delicate. While discussing the pastry I drank a large quantity of gin in order to digest the cakes and I ate a large number of cakes in order to digest the gin.

As we proceeded the lines of the landscape sank more and more to a level, and became more and more despairingly Flemish. The view looked like a billiard table, and but for a row of steeples athwart the rim of the sky there would have been no distinguishing heaven from earth, and it would have been as impossible to estimate the extent of the space as it is at sea.

From time to time the steeples were replaced by the smoking obelisks of the factories, while rows of poplar trees dotted the landscape with strings of exclamation points ! ! ! ! ! ! that made it resemble a pathetic page in a fashionable novel. Hops, the vine of the North, showed more frequently. It is a very pretty plant that climbs up very high poles with a look as of vine-leaves around a thyrsus.

Meanwhile, creatures that, for lack of another term, I must call women, continued to pass from time to time upon the high-road. I must here boldly proclaim

even at the risk of being charged with paradox, that I have never seen anything more burned, more tanned, more derisively brown than these females. I am quite certain that fair-haired women must abound in Abyssinia and Ethiopia, for in Belgium it is mulattoes and negresses that predominate.

The farther one goes the more one breathes a perfume of Catholicity wholly unknown in France. Almost every house has a Madonna or a saint in a niche, and not, I beg you to believe, a saint or a Madonna with broken nose or fingers wanting, but with features and limbs complete. In many villages the Madonnas are dressed in silk gowns and wear a crown, tinsel and elder pith ornaments. As in Spain and Italy a lamp is kept burning before them. The churches also are adorned with true Southern care and amorous coquetry.

When we entered Brussels the rain was falling from the roofs in such abundance that "thirsty dogs might standing drink." Here are my observations of that evening: they bear exclusively on the windows.

The lower panes are covered with a piece of lace of the exact size of the pane, and stretched as tightly as possible. In the centre of the lace is a large hand-embroidered bouquet. The lace is sometimes replaced

by small screens of China matting, plaited exceedingly close, on which are painted landscapes, birds or fruit; these screens, opaque on the street side, allow the people within to see, without being seen, what is going on outside, an occupation rendered the more easy by a combination of concentric mirrors so arranged outside as to reflect into a mirror placed on a table or in a steel globe hung from the ceiling the image of every person traversing the street from either end. I noticed also that all the houses are not only painted in oils but varnished, which is particularly unpleasant to the eye.

After dinner, I started to visit the city, and, after having traversed an endless number of streets lined with houses with crow-foot gables, I suddenly emerged upon the Town Hall Square and experienced the liveliest surprise of my whole trip. It seemed to me as though I had entered another age and the ghost of the Middle Ages had suddenly risen up before me.

Imagine a great square, one whole side of which is occupied by the Town Hall, a marvellous edifice with rows of arches, like the Palace of the Doges in Venice, finials surrounded with traceried balconies, a vast roof filled with decorated attic windows, and then the bold-

est, tallest, slenderest open-work belfry, so slender that it seems to bend with the breeze, and away up on top of it, an archangel, gilded all over, with outspread wings and sword in hand.

On the right, as one looks at the Town Hall, a row of houses that are veritable gems of stone chased by the wondrous hands of the Renaissance. Nothing more lovingly pretty is to be seen anywhere. There are little twisted pillars, overhanging stories, balconies supported by women with pointed breasts and ending in foliage or serpents' tails, medallions with richly carved frames, mythological *bassi-relievi*, allegorical figures upbearing blazoned coats of arms, everything, in a word, that the architectural coquetry of that day could invent that would please and delight the eye. Every one of these houses is admirably preserved; not a stone is wanting, for the triple coat of paint that covers them has protected them as a sheath might have done.

The opposite side is occupied by buildings of a very different character; mansions in the Florentine taste, with vermiculated boss-work, squat pillars, balusters, carved wreaths, fire-pots, and, near the top, great stone scroll-work, volutes twisted several times on

themselves and the technical name of which I do not know. Add to this that almost all the projecting ornaments, such as the capitals of the columns, the grooves of the fluting, the frames of the cartouches and the flames that issue from the braziers are gilded, and you have something strangely magnificent, especially for a poor Parisian who has never yet seen anything else than the houses, dirtied up to the third story, of his own pandemonium.

This side of the square forms a regular architectural gallery, in which every possible variety of Spanish, Italian and French rococo, from the days of Louis XIII to those of Louis XV, is represented by authentic samples admirably selected. I use the word "rococo" in this connection without implying the least reflection upon the thing itself, and merely to designate a period of art that is neither antiquity, nor the Middle Ages, nor the Renaissance, and which, in its way, is just as original and just as worthy of admiration.

Opposite the Town Hall and closing that side of the square, there is a great Gothic palace, a sort of votive mansion, erected by some princess or other in consequence of some happening or other, I do not remember what, having lost the little strip of paper

on which I had copied the Latin inscription on the façade; though I have a good memory, I do not easily recollect epigraphic Latin, especially when I think I have the inscription in my pocket. But on a medal the inscription is of no importance.

This votive house now serves as a meeting place for some dining, smoking, dancing or literary society, and the brilliantly lighted interior made the windows flame out of the dark façade of the old building, itself sunk in the shadow, for the moon was rising behind it and was already casting its veil of lilac, silver glazed crape upon the other houses in the square. The whole thing looked so unnatural and so improbable that I felt as if I were in presence of a piece of stage-setting.

On returning to the hotel my companion and myself were shown to our rooms and our beds, of which we stood in utmost need. Belgian beds are not made like French beds: there are no bolsters, but two huge pillows placed side by side. The blankets are made of cotton, with very effective knots and interlacings. The sheets are of linen; the mattresses are covered with damasked linen not unlike tea-cloths. The candlesticks also are of a different shape from ours: they rest on a very broad base and are somewhat sim-

ilar to those of the time of Louis XV. The flooring is of pine boards in the natural colour, which is a pale salmon, instead of being in marquetry as with us; it is scrubbed every week with sandstone and boiling water. All this may not be very interesting, but it is just such small matters which mark the difference between one country and another.

Brussels is English rather than French in appearance, in the modern portions, and Spanish rather than Flemish in the older. There are few important churches, save Sainte-Gudule in the Rue de la Montagne. The stained-glass windows, the confessionals and the pulpit in this church are of exceeding beauty. It was being scraped, restored, and lime-washed at the time of my visit, for the rage for wash is even worse in Belgium than in France. It was here that I first remarked the Catholic idolatry so widespread in Belgium and quite new to me, for I was acquainted only with our French Voltairian churches. It leads to a profusion of tawdry ornaments, wreaths, *ex-votos*, candles, vases of flowers, embroidered banners, orange trees in boxes, and endless other devout inventions.

A very remarkable thing in Brussels is the inscription borne on every shop: So-and-so, Bootmaker to

the Court; So-and-so, Seed-merchant to the Court; So-and-so, Match-vender to the Court, and so on, without end, and in connection with businesses that apparently have nothing on earth to do with the Court. The pharmacies have for signs huge deer's antlers. As for the wine shops, they are twice as numerous as the houses.

By dint of crawling up the Magdalena-Straas, I managed to reach a fine, large square, called the Place Royale, on which stands a church with a façade on the centre of which there is a nimbus enclosing a sculptured eye that seems to be a model set for the imitation of all the urchins in the place. The Royal Palace is close by; it is a rather large edifice, mediocre architecturally, painted white, in oils, and no doubt a comfortable and commodious dwelling, but one with which art has nothing to do. The park, rather small, is in no wise striking. It contains a small basin, and a few groups, therms, terminals, and statues, all painted in oils and varnished. The trees in this place struck me as being superbly green, even for this country of verdure, and the whole park is delightfully cool.

Having visited the park, I proceeded to the shops of the piratical booksellers; I purchased Alfred de

Musset's *Complete Poems* in one volume, and Jules Sandeau's *Madame de Sommerville;* I wished to purchase also your humble servant's novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, but I have to own that I was unable to do so, as it was not to be found anywhere, whereat I was the more mortified that Bibliophile Jacob, Hippolyte Lucas, and other illustrious personages I am acquainted with, are splendidly pirated, and that I had, I confess it with all my characteristic modesty, hitherto considered myself the equal of these gentlemen. My trip has undeceived me, and has scattered to the winds my foolish fancy. The Bibliophile in particular enjoys so great a reputation in this land that Alphonse Royer's and Barbier's *Mauvais Garçons*, and Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame*, the two best novels inspired by the Middle Ages, are reprinted under his name.

The prose volumes of the *Spectacle dans un fauteuil*, by Alfred de Musset, are unknown in Belgium; the pirate of whom I inquired for them was quite taken aback, and wrote forthwith to his agent ordering him to send on the books. This fact does not speak well for the circulation of the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* and the literary taste of Belgian booksellers.

On leaving the shops of these publishers of counter-

feited editions, I took a cab and had myself driven to the Laeken Gate, in order to see the railway. Belgian cabs are very handsome and utterly unlike our wretched conveyances; they are well horsed and go very fast. The one I was in was a sort of landau lined with white velvet, and in Paris would have passed for a splendid equipage. On the other hand, if these cabs are twice as handsome as ours, they are also twice as dear. They usually stand in the Place Royale, and there are some forty of them.

Railways are now all the fashion; they have become a fad, a mania, a craze! To speak ill of the railways is to deliberately expose one's self to the pleasant insults of the friends of progress and utility. It is making certain of being called a retrogressist, a fossil, a partisan of the ancient régime and of barbarism, and of being looked upon as a man devoted to tyrants and obscurantism. But even were I to have applied to me Andrieux' famous line, —

"Harnessed at the back of Reason's car,"

I boldly affirm that a railway is a very foolish invention. As far as looks go, there is nothing picturesque about it. Imagine a number of logs on which are

placed flat, narrow, iron bands (rails), on which fit grooved wheels of small diameter, about as large as the front wheels of our stage coaches; then a long line of carriages, waggons, and cars fastened one to another by iron chains and separated by thick leather buffers to reduce friction and accidental shocks. At the head, the towing machine, a sort of forge on wheels, from which escape torrents of sparks, and resembling, with its upright funnel, an elephant walking along with its trunk in the air. The perpetual snorting of this machine, which, when at work, emits a black smoke, with a noise like that produced by a marine monster with a cold in its head spouting salt water out of its blow-holes, is unquestionably the most unbearable and most painful thing imaginable. The fetid smell of the coal has also to be reckoned among the advantages of this mode of travel.

I had fancied that one felt no manner of jolts or of motion upon the polished rails; that was a mistake, for the carriages drawn by the locomotive oscillate forward and aft, producing a sort of horizontal rolling which turns one sick. It is not a jolting up and down, like that caused by the ruts of an ordinary road, but a motion like that of a drawer on grooves, opened and

closed rapidly several times running. The locomotive starts, the first carriage pulls the second, which strikes against the buffers, and so on in succession to the end of the line. The rebound is something awful, especially when the engine stops, a ceremony which takes place to the accompaniment of a most disagreeable clatter of rattling iron.

The speed, it must be owned, is fairly great, yet it did not seem to me to be much more than that of a postchaise. I was told, it is true, that the engine could be driven much faster and the speed doubled, but there is this small matter to be taken into account, that one may be sent flying into the air to meet aerolites and shooting stars, a sort of trip that possibly has its charm.

I confess I greatly prefer the old-time coaches drawn by horses to all these strange and disturbing machines. A good barouche, with three strong horses and a postilion only half drunk, cracking his whip gaily and thrashing the genii of the air, is far jollier and pleasanter than those rows of hearses sliding silently along the rails to the asthmatic sound of the engine boiler. Good horses that stamp and neigh, with long manes, satiny quarters, red tufts and bells

scanning with their hoofs this beautiful line of Vergil: —

"Quadrupe | dante pu | trem soni | tu quatit | ungula | campum,"

are certainly to be preferred both from the point of view of poetry and from that of convenience. One may then go to the right or to the left, take short cuts and crosscuts instead of following imperturbably a right line, which of all lines is most distasteful to people who are not fortunate enough to be either mathematicians or candle-makers, and who have preserved in some corner of their souls the feeling for the beautiful, which springs, as every one knows, from the use of curved lines and of zigzags, a truth quite familiar to children on their way to school.

In my opinion, even were the suppression of horses and coachmen the only drawback to railways, it ought to be sufficient to prevent their being adopted. I would not so much mind giving up the coachmen, feeling no great sympathy for them, but it would grieve me to have the splendid animal that has furnished Job and M. Dellile with a subject for such fine descriptions, disappear from the surface of the earth, though really at the rate at which utilitarians are going, I fear

it will not be long ere, as in Cruikshanks' caricature, we have the last horse exhibited between a cage containing humanitarians and another full of Papuans from the South Seas. In another century or so, the George Cuviers and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaires of the day will succeed, with the help of comparative anatomy, in reconstructing the skeletons of horses scattered throughout the strata of tufa, limestone, and marl, will write endless descriptions of them in order to demonstrate that they must not be confounded with the animal called *hippoterium*, which lived before the great renewal of the world brought about by steam, or with the cockchafer or the rhinoceros, and that they were not fish either, as maintained by some scholars.

We are not yet as crazy as the Americans who run railways in every direction, under ground, in water, in the attic, in the cellar and from one corner of their rooms to another. We have too much common sense to indulge in such absurdities, and France will assuredly be the last country to be traversed by lines of railways. Railways are much like omnibuses, which are not very costly to operate, traverse long distances and carry a great many passengers, but never go where you want to go; so that a cab and the first street

that happens along will always be infinitely preferable. Railways and omnibuses alike invariably have their terminus in a mud hole, a closed door or a sewer in course of construction; so that in order to get to the place one desires to reach, one has always to have recourse to the ordinary cab and horse.

Whatever is of real use to man was invented from the beginning of the world, and all the people who have come along since then have worn out their brains to find something new, but have made no improvements. Change is far from being progress; it is not yet proved that steamers are better than sailing vessels, or railways with their locomotives than ordinary roads and carriages drawn by horses. For my part, I believe that men will end by returning to the old methods, which are always the best.

The carriages are divided into barouches, stage-coaches, covered waggonettes and ordinary waggons. In the barouches the seats are divided like the stalls in a theatre, so that one sits in small arm-chairs; the stage-coach is identically the same as the ordinary stage-coach. The fares vary from four francs and ten sous to one franc, and there are several trains daily.

The locomotive car, the steam horse, which had been snorting in the most horrible way for some time, began to snort more loudly and to emit smoke more actively; we began to roll on, first slowly, then more rapidly and finally rather fast.

The country we were traversing was uniformly flat and green; here and there the white houses of Laeken bloomed like daisies on the rich emerald sward, spotted with great oxen in the grass up to their bellies; English gardens with yellow walks; sleepy rivers the waters of which looked like tin or quicksilver; Chinese bridges painted in bright colours, passed by on the right and on the left; tall thin poplars flew by at full gallop; steeples showed on the horizon; great pools of water, like the scattered scales of some giant fish, shimmered here and there on the brown earth in the numerous excavations that bordered the road; a few wine-shops, with the *Verkoopt men dranken* in letters a foot long, smiled pleasantly out of their tiny hop-gardens, and made many advances to the traveller, in order to induce him to get down and drink a big glass of good Flemish beer and smoke a pipe of patriotic Belgian tobacco. But all these advances were in vain, for no man may step off, even to get a

drink, which to my thinking is one of the worst disadvantages of railways.

Gates of painted wood, kept by small boys, closed all the cross roads until such time as the train had passed, and at intervals, frail huts of mud and straw sheltered the linemen whose business it is to see that there are no stones on the line.

The engine, having attained its highest rate of speed, produced on us the same effect as that observed on a boat, when the shores appear to be moving, while you yourself are standing still. The fields diapered with the golden colza flowers, began to fly past with amazing rapidity and to form continuous yellow lines in which one could no longer make out the shape of the blooms; the brown road, dotted with little white chalk pebbles, looked like a huge peahen's tail violently drawn from under us; perpendicular lines became horizontal, and had the configuration of the country been more diversified, it would have produced a strange mirage. The silhouette of Malines, from which stood out chiefly a great square tower, passed by so swiftly that when I nudged my companion to notice it, it had already vanished. This great speed was not kept up, either because the coal gave out, or because the

necessity of landing passengers at the various stations compelled the diminution of the pressure. Nevertheless we were approaching Antwerp, and as the railway does not run into the city itself, a crowd of omnibuses of diverse forms and colours was collected at the terminus. The fare on these omnibuses is six sous, as on our own; they are lined with painted and waxed cloth; have a galleried top for the luggage, and are drawn by three horses abreast, as were the first Paris busses. These horses, better fed and handsomer than the wretched brutes that are used for general transportation with us, have only a very light collar for harness, and are otherwise bare.

Antwerp is entered by a stone gate, adorned with boss-work, coats of arms, and trophies. It is on the whole rather majestic-looking; naturally pink, apple-green, and mouse-coloured houses abound in it; I even saw two or three in the most refreshing of tarred wood. I was most astonished, however, at the prodigious number of Madonnas, painted and adorned with glass beads like the kindly mediæval Madonnas, seen at the corner of every street. Calvaries are equally numerous; almost every wall is covered with crosses, spears, ladders, hammers, nails, sponges, crowns of

thorns, arranged in the form of fasces; great Christs, most hangdog looking, painted of a livid flesh colour and streaked with red lines, rise at the crossing of streets and at the corner of squares; for aureole they have a lantern, and nearly all are provided with an inscription that generally runs as follows: "Ex Christo splendor," or "Christus dat lucem," varied in every possible way. It is impossible to render the effect produced by moonlight, in the evening mist, by these life-size figures, with their reddish lantern that resembles the eye of a Cyclops shining through the darkness.

I had seen in Roger de Beauvoir's album, an exceedingly fantastic sketch by Alphonse Royer, consisting of a huge blob of ink, and pompously entitled: "Antwerp at night." It might just as well have been Constantinople or Mazulipatam, but I had formed, thanks to this most fallacious drawing, a most sombre idea of Antwerp, so that I was mightily surprised to find I could see perfectly there, even at night, thanks to the lantern-bearing Christs. Antwerp is anything but black, mediæval, and crowded; there is not a single stagnant gutter, not a single unpaved street, nothing, in a word, of the picturesque chaos that makes Rouen so

dear to artists. Everything in Antwerp is broad, spacious, airy, and fabulously clean; everything has three coats of paint, even the cathedral, which is bedizened with a most comical pistachio colour.

We went down to the Place Verte, with the praiseworthy intention of having a good dinner, though we did not fully succeed in doing so; but heaven, that considers man's intentions, it is said, will, I hope, pardon our failure. We had been recommended to the Hôtel de l'Union, as a good place to restore the inner man; we therefore proceeded to the *Restauration de l'Union*, for in Belgian-French a restaurant is called a "restauration." It is a very large building of a bluish white, with large windows, metal posts and of commendable appearance. We drank a fairly good Rhine wine, but the cookery was commonplace and had nothing characteristic about it.

As there was still light enough, we visited the Cathedral. It contains three marvellous paintings by Rubens: "The Descent from the Cross," "The Raising of the Cross," and "The Assumption of the Virgin." The first two have shutters, also painted by Rubens, making four more pictures. Six pages of Ohs!, Ahs!, and exclamation points would but feebly

represent the stupor of admiration with which I was filled at the sight of these prodigies. I should need an octavo volume instead of a chapter. The wooden pulpit, carved by Verbruggen, is admirably beautiful. The subject represents Adam and Eve, and the balustrade of the steps, wreathed in vine leaves and foliage, is full of all sorts of strange birds and animals; among others, of turkey-cocks displaying their tails. Is this meant as a sarcastic allusion to the hearers or to the preacher? I dare not venture to answer so delicate a question. The work exhibits wonderful flexibility and cleanliness of touch, the lines are sharp and free, the whole thing is full and facile. It is rich, luxurious, amazingly varied in invention and curious details. Strong men indeed were these sixteenth-century artists! The church also contains some good paintings by Quentin Matsys, Otto Venius, the master of Rubens, Van Dyck and others. The one pity is that this beautiful cathedral, painted pistachio green outside, is daubed with a hideous canary yellow inside, and with several coats of it at that, laid on with the utmost care.

Having visited the interior of the church, it naturally occurred to us to climb up the steeple; it cost us three francs to do so, rather a high price for a steeple. Be-

fore Victor Hugo's novel made Notre-Dame fashionable, one could ascend the towers for six sous; it costs eight now, which is still reasonable.

There are six hundred and twenty-two steps from the pavement to the base of the cross that surmounts the spire; you ascend a narrow spiral staircase, dimly lighted by narrow loopholes. At first the darkness is very intense, on account of the shadow cast by the neighbouring buildings, but as one gets higher up the light increases in symbolical progression to make the climber understand that the higher one rises above the earth the more is the darkness dispelled, and that the true light is above. Half way up are the bells, those monstrous birds that perch and sing on the stone foliage of cathedrals, and rooms where are moulded in mastic cement the broken finials and where are manufactured the projecting ornaments which time or war constantly destroys on the old church. In justice to the Belgians I am bound to say that they care for their monuments with filial love; no sooner has a stone fallen than it is replaced; a hole made than it is stopped up; they would willingly put the lot of them under glass. The profession of monument is really an agreeable one in this country. Only the Belgians are

far too lavish with their apple-green, lemon-yellow, and other non-Gothic paints. The Town Hall of Alost, through which we passed on our return, is a curious specimen of this sort of thing. The walls are painted grass-green, with fine white lines simulating the joints of the stone; the pillars are slate blue, and the statues and carvings varnished silver white. It is comical to a degree and is exactly like a German toy.

After endless windings in the interior of the great tube, we at last emerged upon the platform, and a vast panorama was outspread before us. It is difficult to imagine a grander spectacle; great waves of air bathed our faces, and the wind's cool kisses dried on our wet brows the perspiration caused by the fatigue of the ascent. Flights of doves passed at intervals and alighted like white flakes upon the balustrade, trefoiled so lightly that I dared not lean on it lest I should fall with it into the abyss. The whole city lay crowded at the feet of the cathedral, like a flock at the feet of the shepherd; the highest houses scarcely reached its ankles, and the crow-foot gables looked quaint indeed from that height; it seemed as though the inhabitants of the city had builded steps to storm the cathedral, but had stopped after constructing a dozen, on seeing

the uselessness of their efforts. These numerous roofs with steps leading to nothing resembled a lot of unfinished Babels.

A bird's-eye view of the city exhibits it in the form of a bow of which the Scheldt forms the cord; the bright red and violet blue roofs showed like scales against the evening mist that was even then rising. The river shone in places like a polished steel blade; in others it had the mat brilliancy of the silvery back of a mirror. On the farther bank was seen the Tête-de-Flandre, and beyond it, vast meadows of a velvety green spangled by the waters of the Scheldt which here indulges in many windings. Boats with red sails moved slowly along, their light wake breaking the dull pellicle of these ribbons of molten lead. The horizontal perspective preventing one from seeing the river bed, the vessels seemed to be sailing on dry land and to be ploughs driven by sails. The keeper of the tower drew our attention to four almost imperceptible little black dots near the sky line; they were four Dutch vessels watching the channels. Berg-op-Zoom lies in that direction, but in vain did I polish the lenses of my glasses, I could not make out anything in the distant mists that looked in the least like a town.

Should you be surprised at my great desire to see Berg-op-Zoom, you must know that it was due to the fact that a grandfather of mine was the first man to storm the place and was presented with a sword of honour in return for that fine action. As this happens to be the most glorious tradition in our family history, I should have been well pleased to see, even from a very great distance, the spot where one of my ancestors had exhibited so much courage. But I did not have that satisfaction.

Great banks of reddish vapours rose one above another with coppery and bronze reflections, like gigantic Titanic armours issuing from the furnace; whole masses would be torn away or fall down, with flaming flashes of light as they met, after the manner of a volcano sinking in and of the sublimest effect. Amid these tawny tints shone the sun, like a huge buckler of fire fastened to the arm of the Destroying Angel. The shape of a great cloud, resembling a warrior seated on a floating islet in a sea of fire, completed the illusion. This strange effect lasted for a few minutes ; then the wind blew strong, the outlines of the clouds changed and the archangel melted into mist.

When we had looked long enough at this sight, the

keeper reminded us that we had not yet quite reached the top, and that we had one hundred and twenty steps more to climb. He showed us a narrow staircase no wider than a man's two hands, and told us all we had to do was to keep on climbing.

Imagine a very sharp, very slender spire, hollowed internally, horribly openworked and traceried, as high as Chimborazo, and constantly growing narrower. My comrade, this time, allowed me to go first, an honour I did not in the least covet; indeed, I thought him far too polite. The moment I had ventured within that wretched tube, it appeared to me that I was becoming enormously stout and that I was swelling frightfully. I dreaded being unable to come down again and being compelled to spend the remainder of my days in that place, like the lighthouse keeper's wife, who had grown so stout in her aerial nest that she never was able to pass down the narrow stair she had climbed without difficulty as a slender maiden. I felt heavier than a war elephant bearing a castle on his back; the steps seemed to give way under my feet and my elbows to push the wall outwards, as if it were a bandbox upon which I was leaning. Through the accursed tracery of that infernal spire, as frail as the

stamped-out paper lace used for confections and preserved fruits, I could see long streaks of bluish air or the pavement of the square, which appeared to be the size of a draught-board, with men as big as cockchafers and dogs no larger than flies. It was indeed a most comforting outlook!

By way of adding to the pleasures of the situation it was blowing great guns, and everything in that devil of a steeple was jigging round like the plates on a dresser when a carriage rattles by.

I turned round to see whether my comrade was following me, and stuck my toe in his eye, which fact will give you some idea of the steepness of the stairs. At last we reached the small loophole that opened out on the void, near the ball of the cross. We had completed our climb, and sat down for a few moments on the top step to rest ourselves. While thus seated the happy thought occurred to me that some day the steeples of cathedrals were bound to fall down, and that this might be the very day when the spire of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Antwerp was to give way and fall plump on the pavement below. As it would not have been particularly gratifying to find ourselves at the extreme summit of the parabola, I imparted my

reflection to my comrade, who thought it was in very good taste, and we forthwith tumbled down the spiral stairs, our ears laid well back like hunted hares.

Just as we reached the uppermost platform, the sun, staggering in drunken fashion, stumbled and plunged into an abyss of mist. From time to time an intermittent light, like that of a fire that is being blown up, shot through the black cloud bars. It was of a magnificence that neither brush nor pen can portray; the most amazing and transcendental balderdash would prove inadequate.

On the opposite side there were only cool blue, glazed violet, vaporous gray tints; the night had already come on. Malines, with its steeple with the quadruple dial, alone caught a flaming beam, which made it stand out brilliantly against the background of cultivated fields that showed in various colours. The faint outline of Brussels scarcely peeped above the distant line of the horizon, while the locomotive, with its chariot tail and smoke aigrette, crawled along the rails like some strange animal. A few country houses, in which lights already appeared, dotted with brilliant points the broad tints that grew darker and darker. Then the sun disappeared completely.

No doubt you remember our visiting Antwerp some ten years ago, my dear comrade, when the short thirty-mile line, then just opened, was the only railway on the continent? You must certainly remember the pretty houses, looking like German toys, that we would have liked to carry away in pine boxes as gifts for the children of our acquaintances; the apple-green, rose, sky-blue, citron, fawn, lilac-coloured façades, relieved with white lines, that looked so clean, so bright, so dainty? Well, all is changed. The houses with crow-foot gables, we were wont to admire so much, are now all equally smeared over with that horrible yellow wash used in the Middle Ages to paint over the houses of traitors. It was the worst punishment which that artistic age could devise. No doubt in the case of peculiarly aggravated treason a chocolate-coloured plinth was added to the walls thus dishonoured. Yet do not charge the people of Antwerp with bad taste on this account; they were only too willing to enliven the walls of their dwellings with pleasant shades; it is superior authority that has compelled them to commit this crime of anti-picturesqueness; a decree of the municipality has condemned the innocent town to array itself in a pumpkin-coloured dress and to put on the

livery of shame. It is right to denounce to the hatred of painters and to the curses of poets the name of the chief promoter of this ridiculous measure: he is called Gerard Lagrelle. In the Town Hall there is on exhibition a set of sample colours that may be employed by house-painters. It is a scale of false tones that would make Rubens turn over in his grave, and one would need the license of the days of the Regency in order to characterise as they deserve some of these shades; they run from leaden white to putrid yellow. That is the present condition of Antwerp. I must add that the *faille*, that survival of the Spanish mantilla, has almost entirely disappeared.

The lantern-bearing Christs and the illumined Madonnas at the street corners seemed to me to be much less numerous than formerly. The three paintings by Rubens in the Cathedral did not dazzle me as they did on my first trip. Is this due to my sight having failed during the past ten years, or have these noble heads really undergone an alteration due to time? I congratulate myself on having come into the world at a time when the masterpieces of Rubens, Raphael, and Titian were still visible, and I cannot help pitying posterity that will know them by engravings only. Our

descendants will not enjoy the serene pleasure of admiring a sublime thought under a divine form.

It is fifty miles from Antwerp to Liège, a mere step nowadays. So my comrade and myself were unable to resist the desire to go to see the preparations for the great jubilee soon to take place there. We therefore started together for Liège, called Lüttich in Flemish. At the railway station, where we lunched, a very pretty girl who was waiting on us consented to give us beer. I note the fact, for that was the only time we were able to get any on this trip.

I will not describe a country which you know thoroughly, and, besides, what can one see when carried along by that hippogriff of steel and iron called a locomotive? You travel dazed and dazzled; the trees flee by like a routed army; the steeples flash past pointing to the sky; there is scarcely time to note in the green meads white or red spots, that are herds of cattle, a few scale-like tiles and wisps of smoke that are villages.

In the course of a few hours I had reached Liège, the approach to which in this direction is charming indeed. It is a delightful maze of water, trees, and houses. My "vigilant," that is what a cab is called

here, did not travel so fast but that I could inspect the signs and shop names. On an old blackened monument I read the following: *This church for sale, for demolition or other purposes.*

The city folk were busy preparing for the procession; rest altars and triumphal arches adorned with figures of angels and the theological virtues in painted canvas; oriflammes and banners of guilds and of neighbouring towns filled the streets, which were black with cassocks, as twenty-nine bishops and archbishops were to be present at the ceremony. Stalls of venders of chaplets, Agnus Dei, and blessed medals were erected under the portals of every church and appeared to be doing a good business.

This outpouring of the church beyond the walls of the edifice, this Catholicism mingling familiarly with life and invading the public streets, is a curious sight for a Frenchman who is not accustomed to these external manifestations of worship. Liège thus wreathed with flowers reminded me of Corpus Christi day in the old days and recalled one of the brightest memories of my childhood.

Such were my thoughts as I visited the court of the Town Hall, surrounded with granite columns of fan-

tastic orders, no two of them being alike, and the pretty church of Saint James, which has an elegant Renaissance porch.

Not far from Liège, Serin smokes and seethes. It is there that Cockerill has his works. The forges of Lemnos, with their kings, poor Cyclops, were not much by the side of this vast establishment, always coal blackened, flaming red, and where metals flow in torrents; where iron is puddled and purified; where are manufactured these huge forgings, the steel bones of steam engines. In this place industry rises to the height of poetry and leaves far behind it the inventions of mythology.

From Liège to Verviers, the railway, piqued, no doubt at always being told that it is too fond of the level and disdains picturesque sites, has chosen, as might have been done by some old-time road, a very broken bit of country. A small stream, the Vesdre, mischievously enjoys barring constantly the path of the railway. It has to be bridged at every step, but once the bridge has been crossed, a tunnel turns up, and so on alternately. The landscape is delightful; it consists of wooded slopes, relieved with just enough rocks to be rustic without becoming wild, and diapered with

villages, country seats, and houses of pleasaunce. Through it all plays the Vesdre, producing charming effects among the willows, alders, and poplars.

A branch line runs to Aix-la-Chapelle, Charlemagne's old city. At one of the stations a curious soldier, wearing a black leather mediæval helmet, adorned with brass ornaments and a spike of the same metal, dressed in a close fitting, short blue cloth surcoat, like a knight of old starting for the crusades, asked me for my passport. I displayed it to the gaze of my warrior with purely civil grace. It was the first time the document had been of any use to me. Within a given time the railways will bring about the suppression of passports. Fancy asking for the passports of two thousand travellers passing rapidly through a city or stopping in it for half a day only! The customs also will have to be modified, in view of the impossibility of examining every piece of luggage. In ten years' time there will be nothing to stay the flight of travellers from one end of Europe to the other.

I shall not be audacious enough to speak of Aix-la-Chapelle after the illustrious author of "The Rhine." He has told us of the wonders of the Treasury and spoken of the bones of the great Charlemagne in a

style peculiarly his own. When I visited the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, I was full of the monologue of Charles V in Hernani, the lines of which crowded back in my memory.

Aix-la-Chapelle, in German Aachen, is a clean and well laid out city, surrounded with handsome walks; the one called la Borcette is particularly pretty. Those who, trusting to remembrances, look for a Gothic city and quaintly carved dwellings will be disappointed. The things that most strike the traveller are the sentry-boxes, gates and posts with their diagonal black and white stripes. The theatre, adorned with an Apollo Musagetes, and in that Odeonic style from which it is impossible to escape, was closed, and confirmed me in my resolve to proceed to Cologne that very evening.

Have you ever owned a box of genuine Jean-Marie Farina eau de cologne? If you have one, look at the cut on the label and you will have an accurate idea of Cologne. The Cathedral attracts one, because workmen are busy upon it, and a Gothic cathedral, filled with modern masons, strikes one as incongruous, though nothing can be more intelligible. The sides of the square are occupied by small shops in which are sold

views of the Cathedral, both in its present and in its future condition, chaplets, devotional engravings, and books.

The woman from whom I purchased some of these engravings thought she must, no doubt in order to keep abreast of civilisation, exhibit the most Voltairian scepticism concerning her wares. Is not an unbelieving old woman selling crosses, missals, and legends full of the spirit of the Middle Ages, such as Emperor Octavian, Peter and Magdalen, Genevieve of Brabant, Grizelidis, a hideous thing?

One of my dreams was to see Rembrandt's famous painting, known as "The Night Watch;" so, taking passage on one of those steamers that go down the Rhine bearing an orchestra, I left it at Emmerich to go on its way to Nimeguen. A short branch railway that I had to get to at Arnheim that same evening, was to land me at the gates of Amsterdam. I traversed the intervening distance at the very moderate trot of a postchaise, which allowed me to admire in detail the various beauties of the landscape. Dutch postilions are eminently phlegmatic, and their horses share this tendency, so unfavourable to speed, besides appearing, like their brethren in other lands, downcast

at the introduction of the railway. These poor quadrupeds silently acknowledge themselves beaten by the locomotives and are satisfied with a pace of six miles an hour when one is forced to have recourse to them.

The moment one gets beyond the black and white striped limits of Rhenish Prussia, the appearance of the country suddenly changes. A few turns of the wheels take you into a new world. The villages look clean and well off; the houses assume Van de Velde and Van der Heyden airs; the roofs are steeply pitched and have crow-foot gables; wheels, set up on poles, invite storks to build their nests there; brick shows ruddy and joyous upon the façades with white lintels; great trees, with rich foliage, plunge their roots in pools of brown water on which are sailing squadrons of ducks. As one goes by the glance penetrates calm and restful interiors and vaguely perceives domestic scenes. On either side of the road, almost always built on an embankment, are to be seen as far as the eye can reach, meadows cut by ditches, with straggling clumps of trees, amid which wander, half hidden in the luscious grass, some of those fine cows that have made Paul Potter famous.

Beyond Arnheim, as far as I could judge in the growing darkness and while proceeding more rapidly by train, the character of the country is strange; the meadows become barer and partake of the nature of barrens and steppes; the vegetation blasted by the salt air is poorer, the sand hills, those feeble barriers opposed to the storms of Ocean, draw nearer. Yet the landscape, diversified here and there by the outline of a tree, has a certain grandeur, especially when seen in the purple mists of evening.

It was pitch dark when the train reached the station. Then all the Dutch in the carriages, giving the lie to their proverbial reputation for slowness and phlegm, seized upon their parcels with more than Southern vivacity and started on a run for the city, while the drivers of the local cabs whipped up their nags and drove them at full gallop; it looked exactly like the rout of an army hotly pursued. The mystery was soon explained; a great gate, one of the leaves of which closed so suddenly upon me that I was nearly caught in it, was the cause of the hurrying; the hour for the closing of the city gates had struck.

My vehicle was bearing me rapidly towards an hotel the name of which had been given me, and I strove,

as I bent out of the window, to make out some of the aspects of the unknown city I was traversing.

Amsterdam, seen at night, presents a most quaint and striking aspect. To a stranger the lines of great trees, the rows of houses with high gables, the canals, the black, oily, sleepy waters of which reflect in long streams the lights of the shops and the windows, the silhouettes of bridges and locks, the masts and rigging unexpectedly lighted by some stray beam, combine to form a mysterious and fairy-like ensemble, which seems to belong to dreamland rather than to reality. Nor does that impression disappear with daylight, for Amsterdam is one of the quaintest of cities. Situated on the Zuyderzee, on the banks of that arm of the sea called the Y, the Dutch Venice spreads out in the shape of a crescent. A sort of fan of canals opens out between the houses and imparts to it a peculiar physiognomy. Looking towards the harbour, the prospect is usually as follows: a canal vanishing between two rows of ancient trees, and houses with crow-foot gables or volutes; in the distance, a water-mill with its ruff of woodwork, and a steeple quaintly bulbous, in the Moscovite taste, recalling the turrets of the Kremlin; in the foreground a foot-bridge, a draw-bridge, the

beams of which try to look like gibbets, boats with red sails, their tarry sterns adorned with a stripe of that pretty apple-green that Camille Roqueplan and William Wylde know so well how to reproduce, and a swarm of sailors, fishermen, peasant women, and porters handling bales.

It being yet too early for the Museum to be opened, I had myself driven at hap-hazard through the town, and everywhere I met with the same stamp of originality. Many of the garden fences are of boards placed transversely and tarred over. A ditch, covered with those small lentil-like plants that give a verdigrised tone to sleeping waters, runs along the houses which do not stand on the banks of a canal. The charming dwellings I passed mingled in delightful proportions Chinese fancifulness and Dutch exactness.

If at times the Javanese look of a pavilion surprises one, the remembrance soon recurs that Amsterdam has long enriched itself in Batavia. By their love for porcelain, lacquer and varnish, by their scrupulous cleanliness, their patient ways, their taste for flowers, painting, and odds and ends, the Dutch are uncommonly like the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire. It is from Holland that the Chinese obtain nowadays the

craquelé céladons, the verrucose bronzes, the web-like ivories, the idols of jade and pagodite, and the screens with relief designs the secret of which they have lost. All the porcelain manufactured for the past two hundred years in Pekin is to be found in Amsterdam.

In the course of my drive I had noticed a large number of wreaths of foliage adorned with gilt paper and tinsel, from which depended little tin fishes. I was told that it was in celebration of the herring having struck in. As a matter of fact the herring is one of the sources of the wealth of Holland, and the city was right to rejoice. Strange indeed is this migration of fish that start from the Pole at a fixed date and go forth to pile themselves up in the salt barrels of every nation bordering on the ocean.

The dress of the citizens of Amsterdam in nowise differs from that of the Parisians or of the Londoners. The women of the middle classes have but one characteristic garment, a jacket that falls very low and forms a sort of coat. It is almost always of cheap lilac print; lilac, indeed, appeared to me to be the favourite colour of the Low Countries. It might even be thought to exclude every other shade, were there

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Russian Peasant Girl

not some pink exceptions, few in number, it is true, to prove that fancy is admissible in the matter of jackets. It is perhaps puerile to remark that all the women have the same shape of nose, long, white, and rather turned up, with very wide nostrils. A mould could not give more identical copies. I draw the attention of future tourists to this fact. For the rest the women are pretty enough, and recall the types consecrated by Gerard Dow: plump fairness and gentle sadness.

A few peasant women from the isles of the Zuyderzee and from the provinces more remote from the invasion of new ideas, wear the splendid headdress worthy of a mediæval queen, which consists of silver lace and gold plates placed on the temples, and which is at once most graceful and noble.

One thing which surprises the traveller is the wheelless vehicle, the Dutch name of which escapes me, placed on a sledge, like quarter casks of beer with us. These peculiar vehicles are becoming rarer, and will soon have wholly disappeared. One is also struck by the huge size and strange shape of the horses, that are shod with a sort of pattens that increases their height by several inches. Their arched heads, their monstrous

cruppers, their swelling necks, their hoofs covered with huge masses of hair, their wild manes and their long tails recall the equestrian portraits by Van Dyck, the battle-scenes by Van der Meulen, the hunting-scenes by Parrocel and Lauterbourg. In France these powerful Frisian and Mecklenburg breeds are now rarely met with.

It was now ten o'clock and the Museum was open. In a few minutes I should be gazing upon the splendid masterpiece of the great master.

The first thing that catches the eye as one ascends the stairs in the Museum at Amsterdam, is a gigantic swan, with wings displayed, feathers ruffled, beak half opened, in an attitude at once anxious and protecting. Although a divine soul breathes under the snowy whiteness of the noble bird, it is not intended to be an incarnation of Jupiter going to seduce Leda; the painter, Asselyn, sought to symbolise in this emblem the vigilance of the Grand Pensioner, Jean De Witt. I found this out from the guide book; I could never have made it out for myself. But never did Snyders or Jordaens paint a finer picture.

"The Night Watch," the largest work ever painted by Rembrandt, fills almost the whole of one side of a

room that might be better lighted. To remedy this, the painting is mounted on a bracket that allows the picture to be drawn from the wall until the right light has been obtained.

Before I speak of this marvel, it may not be out of place to tell under what circumstances it was painted and what is the theme the artist has treated.

If there be anything that confirms the theory I have so often put forth and maintained, namely, that to painters of true genius the subject is a matter of utmost indifference, it is assuredly the wondrous painting in the Museum at Amsterdam. Its name, "The Night Watch," might lead people who have not seen it, to imagine that it represents some mysterious and fantastic scene, a nightmare of shadow and terror such as Rembrandt sketched so well; but there is nothing so poetical about it; the picture merely represents the assembling of the National Guard of the day.

If one looks up Wagenaar, the author of a history of Amsterdam, one finds that the militia was ordered, on May 4, 1642, to be ready for a review that was to take place on the evening of the 19th, under penalty of twenty-five guldens fine in case of absence. The object was to receive the Prince of Orange who was to

arrive accompanied by the daughter of Charles I of England, whom he had just taken in marriage. It surely was impossible to give a painter a more insignificant and more prosaic subject. Modern efforts along this line suffice to indicate what such a subject now brings forth. It must be borne in mind also that it was necessary to put the big wigs of the militia well in front, and to attain resemblance in the case of each and every one, for most of these faces are portraits, and the queer names of their owners have been preserved.

It may be assumed that all these worthies had not received written summonses to turn out, or else that the use of such notices was unknown in the good city of Amsterdam, for the beat of the drum seems to have surprised them in the midst of their occupations: they are hurrying as though a single minute's delay would involve the fine of twenty-five gulden; they rush forth half dressed; one man is buttoning his jacket, and another is drawing on his gloves as he goes. The whole scene is filled with infinite movement, disorder, and rush. The Spartans under Leonidas did not spring to arms to defend the Thermopylæ with greater courage than these worthy and debonair Dutch citizens going to meet the Prince of Orange.

You are aware of the fanciful taste of the Leyden miller's son in the matter of the costumes he puts on his figures; well, he never was more amazingly startling than in this inoffensive meeting of militia-men. It is true that the costumes of the day lent themselves more readily to painting than do those of our times. The jackets of embroidered leather, the points, the wide-topped boots, the helmets, the breastplates, the neckplates, the broad baldrics, the swords with heavy shell guards, all these, even when worn by a militia-man, may furnish opportunities to the brush of a skilful painter. What Rembrandt has made of them is absolutely prodigious; never was the fury of execution carried to such a pitch; there is a temerity in the work of the brush, a craze of impasto of which Decamps' most violent sketches do not give even a faint idea. Some of the gold lace is modelled in full relief; some of the foreshortened fingers have been done at one stroke of the brush, while there are noses that fairly stand out of the canvas. It is at once the strangest thing and one that redounds to the glory of Rembrandt that this execution so incredible in its brutality, is at the same time extremely delicate. It is a finish obtained by fisticuffs and kicks, but such as the

most careful painters have never been able to attain. From the chaos of broken touches, from the tumult of shadows and lights, from the masses of colour cast on as if at hap-hazard, there springs supreme harmony.

Rembrandt, who, of all men, assuredly cared least for the Greeks and Romans, and whose mighty triviality accepts unhesitatingly the meanest aspects of nature, does not, on that account, as might easily be believed, lack style and elevation of thought. By means of the peculiar accent he imparts even to the objects he has most faithfully reproduced, by the romantic quaintness of his costumes, and the deep thoughtfulness of even the ugliest faces he paints, he attains a monstrous beauty more easily felt than described. His work has a formidable character that brings it up to the level of all masterpieces. The fantastic and masterly manner in which he handles light and shade, the sublime effects of chiaroscuro which he evolves, make of him as poetical an artist as ever lived. All he needs to move you and make you thoughtful for a whole day is an old man rising from his arm-chair, and a star scintillating against a dark background.

These worthy Dutchmen have been provided by his brush with curled up mustaches and beards, bristling

eyebrows, hands on hips, martial poses and hectoring airs. Never did condottieri, landsknechts, or Stradiotes look more surlily grim; Salvator Rosa's brigands look like peaceful citizens by the side of these worthy militia-men. The drummer, in particular, is beating his drum with relentless fierceness, while he casts glances fit to make the earth quake with terror. On the other hand nothing can be more engaging, more fair, more golden than the little maid dressed in yellow seen through an almost inextricable collection of legs and arms.

This painting, so Wagenaar further tells us, adorned, as late as 1764, the court room of the aforesaid militia. What a pleasure it must have been in those days to fail to report for guard duty! A man was summoned before the court, and while he was being tried could gaze undisturbed upon the wondrous painting hung behind the bench of judges. Times have changed indeed! Where is the militia regiment that would dream of ordering a picture of Delacroix and hanging it up in its court room?

This brilliant painting bears the date of 1642, at which time Rembrandt had attained mature age and the full ripeness of his talent. It is a strange fact that

the earlier paintings of the Dutch painter are quiet, polished and finished in execution, of a light, fair colour, and reposeful in effect. As he grows older he warms up, instead of cooling down ; instead of becoming more careful, he lets himself go ; instead of attenuating, he exaggerates. Having completely mastered technique, he yields to his fancy ; day by day his originality develops and becomes more striking ; he works over the thick, dark colour with his lion claws and with incredible ferocity ; his mane becomes wilder and more and more tawny and ruddy ; no cavern, however pitchy dark, now has terrors for him ; he plunges boldly in, sure that with a single touch he will light up the darkness as with a torch.

Fine indeed is it to watch a master to whom advancing age gives whatever it takes from others. Happy the artist who listens not to the timid counsels of prudence and who becomes bolder and bolder at the very time when the most fiery cool down, and, upborne by an inflexible conviction, carries his originality to the extreme of fury and even extravagance. No painter, no poet has said his last word. Strong and glorious are those who persistently seek to know themselves, who reject from their own nature whatever it may

hold of undefined and commonplace, and who develop their special qualities without caring for the clamours of the critics and the bridling up of the bourgeois.

There is also in this Museum another painting by Rembrandt: "The Syndics of the Cloth Market," a work of the first rank and so superbly painted that it would compel attention for a whole day, but for the fact that the "Night Watch" stands near it, eclipsing everything else in the gallery and depriving you at one and the same time of the desire and the ability to look at anything else.

That evening, still dazzled by the masterpiece, I was wandering by one of the great canals that run into the harbour, and met a canvas sentry-box walking along. It was the local Punch and Judy which, having no doubt failed to secure an audience, was sadly wending its way home. The impresario's wife accompanied the theatre and guided it on its way. I signed to her to stop, and made her understand, by a continuous pantomime of coin, that I desired to enjoy an immediate and special performance of the immortal drama that no poet has succeeded in equalling.

The Dutch Punch, or Punchinello, is utterly

unlike the type generally known by that name; he wears a black mustache, no hump or but a small one, and has a rascally air peculiarly his own. He thrashes his wife, his friend, his neighbours, the charcoal burner, the knife grinder; he fights the devil, the police officer, the executioner; in a twinkling the front of the box is covered with a heap of dead and wounded. So far, the behaviour of the Dutch Punch is nothing out of the common, but at this point the drama becomes of terrifying proportions and attains a depth of thought worthy of the second part of "Faust." The victorious Punch strides across the field of battle, indulging in the mad hilarity and the disorderly gestures characteristic of triumphant heroes, when there suddenly appears a little doll brilliantly dressed in gauze and tinsel, that takes to dancing a polka and smiting Punch so hard with the tip of her foot, that he soon falls lifeless upon the bodies of his victims. Punch dead, the dancer starts upon a prodigiously rapid waltz, leaves the ground and whirls herself into the heavens.

So, mighty Punchinello, who fearedst neither thy wife, nor the police, nor the executioner, nor the devil himself, thou art cast down and destroyed by a polka, and

a slim doll has proved mightier than all the powers of earth and heaven!

After the "Night Watch" I was bound to see "Doctor Tulp's Lesson of Anatomy," which is in the Hague Museum. A dashing sketch by my friend Chenavard, to say nothing of the engraving of it met with everywhere, had filled me with the liveliest desire to behold the original. I therefore took the train for the Hague; the line running along the inland gulf called the Harlem Zee.

It is impossible to imagine anything more smiling, more dainty, cleaner or better kept than the little houses with their bright red roofs that shine amid their green gardens like apis on moss. One cannot help saying to one's self: "How gladly would I end my days in one of these lovely homes;" so surely does it seem that one must necessarily be happy in them. One forgets that all these pretty places are undermined by water, from which they have been reclaimed by the large use of piles, and that lurks in those verdant, undulating meads that form a velvet mantle for the alluvial mud soil.

The Hague, which I reached that evening, is an uncommonly picturesque city; the trees, houses and

canals appear to have been arranged for the special delectation of water-colour painters. In particular there are water-lanes bordered by gardens and fanciful buildings of the most charming effect. The palace, which was pointed out to me, is remarkable only for its simplicity. Among the pictures it contains, almost all by modern artists, my attention was drawn to a number painted by a dark-skinned Polynesian prince who had been sent to Europe to be educated. He was called Radin-Saleh. A very characteristic soldier's head and lions fighting over a prostrate buffalo, painted by him, struck me by the vigour and dash of the touch.

Opposite the palace rises a sort of modern Gothic castle, in front of which has been set up the Count de Niewkerke's bronze statue of William the Silent. This equestrian statue looks infinitely better at the Hague than it did in Paris. The courtyard of this neo-mediæval building is full of Senegal storks, crested herons and other rare birds.

Pictures are late risers in Holland, so, while waiting for the opening of the Museum, I went to visit the park that surrounds the Summer Palace, although the weather was turning to rain. Imagine huge trees, mostly ash and elms, whose roots are almost always

in the water and which outspread their rich green foliage over ponds, lakes, and streams whose tranquil surface cradles their sombre reflections; duckweed, water-lilies, all the cold family of aquatic plants fill the ditches cut by the side of the roads; a cool moisture freshens the air even when the heat is greatest and imparts to the vegetation an extraordinary vigour. At every group of picturesquely twisted trunks, at every azure perspective through the thick foliage, at every sheaf of plants bending under the weight of the dew, I said to myself: "If only the French landscape painter who succeeded in discovering such marvellous sites in the park at Saint-Cloud were here!"

The Residence is the most delightful dwelling that ever poet dreamed of; unfortunately poets never behold the realisation of their dreams. There was one drawing-room in particular, hung with Chinese tapestries of exquisite and fabulous beauty, the subjects of which were the four Seasons, represented by the various agricultural pursuits proper to each of them. In another room were birds embroidered in relief upon a background of white satin. Fairies themselves could not have worked them more daintily and delicately; it was nature itself imitated with that superabundance of

arabesques and perspective of which the learned ignorance of the Chinese alone possesses the secret.

The hall, which is more than forty feet in height from the ceiling to the floor, is painted from top to bottom with allegorical designs in honour of the House of Nassau, by Jordaens and pupils of Rubens. It is unique in its way. There are perfect avalanches of golden hair, of pink and white flesh, streams of nude women that would scandalise the æsthetic school of Overbeck. When the Flemish painters of that day had the chance to indulge in theological virtues and symbolical figures, they did so to their hearts' content. It is really most comical and amazing to see what Prudence, Chastity, Good Faith, Justice and other substantives personified for the benefit of princes who wish to have their palaces decorated, become under their sensual brushes. Happily these men were thoroughly acquainted with all the resources of the palette, and the beauty of the execution prevents one thinking of the æsthetic side of their work.

There is especially a triumphal entry of some prince or other of the dynasty, painted by Jordaens *propria manu*, and which is unquestionably the most astounding mêlée of naked women, lions and horses, that ever

roared upon the length of a peaceful wall; the torrent of satiny flesh, golden manes, bluish quarters, cheeks as ruddy as if they were about to burst into flames, produces the strangest possible effect. I admit unrestricted fancy, but it is really impossible to perceive in this work anything that looks like a prince of Nassau or Orange. It is true that the painting is a wonder, which at once destroys the value of my criticism.

The rain, which had been threatening since the morning, now began to fall, first in drops, then in buckets, then in pools, and finally in cataracts; bands of toads joyously hopped over the soaked sand of the walks, and the water seemed to leap from the ground to meet the rain. I found a temporary refuge in a little café, situated in the centre of the park; and while a carriage was being fetched, I watched the handsome emerald leaves shining under the drops as the dust of June was being washed off them by the beneficent shower; I admired the white trunks, polished like pillars, and spotted here and there with pretty patches of moss; and this with the greater wonder because I had just been told that the vast and shady park was like a forest planted on a floor, the soil being so marshy, so shifting, so interpenetrated by water, that it had been

necessary to stiffen it by means of a wooden flooring covered with a layer of loam.

The carriage came up, and a quarter of an hour later I was in presence of "Doctor Tulp's Lesson of Anatomy." The painting is so completely different in aspect from the "Night Watch," that at first sight it might well be supposed to be the work of another master. When Rembrandt painted it, he was only twenty-six! It is a masterpiece, and a quiet masterpiece.

Placed in the amphitheatre of the School of Surgery, the painting remained there until 1828, when the worthy idiots of the day proposed to sell it by auction for the benefit of some charity or another. The day was fixed and the masterpiece was no doubt about to be lost to Holland, when the King forbade the sale, gave the surgeons thirty-two thousand florins, and had the superb painting hung in the Hall of Honour in the Museum at the Hague.

Doctor Nicholas Tulp, who, it appears, presented the College with the "Lesson of Anatomy," is surrounded by seven distinguished personages of the day: Jacob Block, Hartmann, Andriaan Salbran, Jacob de Witt, Matthys Kalkoen, Jacob Koelveld, and Franz

Leonen, who are listening to an anatomical demonstration by the learned professor with admirable intensity of attention.

It is the simplest and most striking of compositions, while at the same time it is not a composition at all. A foreshortened body, the breast well lighted and the legs in shadow, is stretched upon a table. The professor, standing by, raises the muscles of the arm with a pair of surgical pincers, and is apparently describing them. The dead body, pale and bloodless, surrounded by these grave personages, with fair beards and faces that are pleasant and intelligent notwithstanding their sinister occupation, fixes itself in the memory in indelible fashion.

In this work the manner of the painter is sober, restrained, precise. He has made no use of impasto, high lights or visible touches; all is soft, melting, and polished. There is not to be found in this picture the warm, vaporous, shadowing tint that gilds and veils the other works of the master; but how sure of himself he is already, how deeply learned and how strong in his moderation.

This "Lesson of Anatomy" strikes me as being one of the masterpieces the study of which would be

in the highest degree profitable to young painters of the Colourist school. Thanks to the wondrous spell of art, that hideous subject which, in reality, would make any one but a surgeon turn away his eyes, holds and fascinates you for hours at a time, though nothing is dodged, nothing dissimulated and frank horror could not be carried farther.

I must not forget a "Susannah at the Bath," a sketch or a replica on a smaller scale, with a few changes, of the magnificent life size "Susannah," that was exhibited for a short time at Susse's and purchased by M. Paul Périer.

Paul Potter's great picture, representing a bull, and the reputation of which is world-wide, did not impress me quite as favourably as it should have. I have seen such proud handsome bulls in Spain that this cottony animal failed to delight me.

An "Eden," by Paradise Breughel, and "Adam and Eve," by Rubens, and the portraits of that artist's two wives, are works one cannot help looking at, even when one has resolved, as I had, to look but at one single painting by a single chosen master.

On the ground floor of the Museum of Painting there is displayed the greatest collection of Chinese

curiosities, barbaric weapons, and other oddities. Everything is to be found there, even authentic sirens and fauns.

From the Hague I went to Rotterdam, passing through Delft and Schiedam, in order to catch the steamer that was to take me to England by way of the Meuse and the Thames. The sea passage would take about thirty hours, but I had seen the "Night Watch" and the "Lesson of Anatomy," and in this world you must pay for everything; Napoleon him self said so.

A Day in London

A DAY IN LONDON

I HAD spent the night at a masked ball, and there is nothing so depressing as the morning after a ball. I therefore came to a sudden decision and resolved to treat my complaint homeopathically; so within a few hours, having barely got rid of my caftans, poniards, and Turkish rig, I was on my way to London, the native place of spleen.

Perfidious Albion met me in the stage-coach, in the shape of four Englishmen surrounded and fortified with all manner of instruments of comfort, and not knowing a word of French, so that my English trip began without delay. At Boulogne, a town wholly Anglicised, I was compelled to have recourse to a pathetic pantomime in order to make the people understand that I was hungry and sleepy, and that I wanted supper and a bed. At last they fetched a dragoman who translated my requests, and I managed to eat and sleep. English only is understood in Boulogne. I do not know whether, on the other hand, French is the idiom spoken by the inhabitants of Dover, but I do not believe it is. I have already noticed several times

on our frontiers this invasion of the customs and speech of our neighbours. The sort of faint tint that, on maps and in reality, separates nations, is washed out on the French side rather than on that of the next kingdom. Thus, all the Channel seaboard is English; Alsace is German on its edges; Flanders is Belgian; Provence Italian, and Gascony Spanish. A man who knows pure Parisian only is often hard put to it in these provinces, and if the frontier be crossed, not a single trace of French is to be found.

At six in the morning I stood on the deck of the "Harlequin" steamer. Do not look for a description of a storm, in which Neptune makes his appearance with a green beard and urges on his sea-coursers. The Channel, which is said to be so capricious and stormy, was as clement to me as was the Mediterranean in old days, though, of course, the Mediterranean is but a sky set upside down, and just as blue and as limpid as the other.

Two or three hours later, a white line, resembling a cloud, arose out of the azure main: it was the coast of England, which owes its name Albion to the colour of its shores. The immense precipitous cliff, steep like the wall of a fortification, is Shakespeare's Cliff;

the two little black dots are the openings of a railway viaduct in course of construction; at the foot of the bay is Dover with its tower which, it is claimed, may be seen from Boulogne in clear weather — but it never is clear weather. The day was very fine; there was not a cloud in the sky, yet a diadem of dense vapour crowned the brows of Old England. The country, so far as it was visible, looked, though denuded by winter, neat, clean, well cared for, carefully raked over; the chalk cliffs, precipitous as walls, and at the feet of which the sea hollows out caves for the benefit of smugglers, heightened the regularity of the prospect. Here and there showed mansions and cottages in strange styles of architecture, with huge towers, crenelated walls, covered with ivy and broken down in places, and, at the distance at which we were, resembling Gothic castles so closely that the mistake was pardonable. These various citadels and donjons with drawbridges and battlements, provided even with cannon and culverin in bronzed wood, give to the shore line a rather picturesquely grim and bristly look, though internally they are furnished with the most refined luxury. There was pointed out to me, standing in the centre of a great park, a white house with

Gothic finials, though of modern construction, which belongs to an enormously wealthy Jew, Mr. Moses Montefiore, who recently accompanied M. Crémieux to the East in connection with the question of the Damascus Jews. From this point the coast line curves up to Ramsgate. Within the curve lies Deal, the landing place of the Romans, it is said, on their first descent into England. I see no reason why it should not be the spot. Next is seen Walmer Castle, the seat of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, a dignity now held by the Duke of Wellington. Then comes Sandwich, and a little farther on Ramsgate, a pleasure resort of Londoners, the straight streets and tall houses of which seem to run right into the water. All this is beautiful, no doubt, yet the real prospect, the view so fine that one does not care for any other, is not that on the land but that on the sea.

In the Downs, opposite Deal, more than two hundred wind-bound vessels are waiting for a favourable breeze in order to get out of the Strait; some are coming, others going; they are everlastingly on the move. Whichever way one turns, the smoke of steamers and the dark or bright silhouettes of ships are seen against the sky line. Everything indicates the

approach to the Babylon of the seas. On the French side there is absolute solitude: not a ship, not a steamer. The farther one goes the greater the crowd of vessels. The horizon is filled with them; sails swell like domes, masts rise like spires, the rigging forms a maze; it looks like a vast Gothic city afloat; like a Venice that has dragged its anchors and is coming to meet one. The lightships, their scarlet sides showing by day, their red lights by night, point out the way to these flocks of vessels whose sails are their fleeces. These have come from the Indies, manned by a crew of Lascars; those are homeward bound from the Northern seas, and the ice on their sides has not yet had time to melt. Here are China and America bringing their tea and sugar, but in the multitude, the British ships are always recognisable by their sails, dark as those of Theseus' ship leaving for Crete, a sombre livery of mourning they owe to the wretched London climate.

The Thames, or rather the estuary into which its waters flow, is so wide and the banks themselves so low that these cannot be seen from the centre of the stream. It is only after steaming many a mile that one at last makes them out, narrow, flat, black lines

between the gray sky and the turbid water. The narrower the river becomes, the more compact grows the crowd of vessels; the paddles of the steamers that ascend or descend lash the waters constantly and pitilessly; the smoke that issues from their iron funnels mingles its black plumes and forms new banks of clouds in the heavens that could very well dispense with this addition. The sun, if the sun showed in London, would be darkened by them. On every hand are heard the groans and the hissings of the lungs of the engines, from out whose iron nostrils issue jets of boiling steam.

It is most painful to listen to these strident, asthmatic breathings; to the groans of matter at bay and driven to despair; it seems to complain and to call for mercy, like a worn out slave whom an inhuman master overburdens with work. I am well aware that manufacturers will laugh at me, yet I am not far from sharing the views of the Emperor of China, who proscribes steamers as an obscene, barbarous, and immoral invention. I think it is an impious thing to torment in such fashion God's creation, and I believe Dame Nature will one day avenge herself for the ill treatment she has to put up with at the hands of her too avid children.

Besides steamers, sailing-vessels, brigs, schooners, frigates, from the huge three-master to the simple fishing-boat, to the punt in which two people can scarce find sitting room, follow each other uninterruptedly and unceasingly, forming an endless naval pageant in which every nation in the world is represented. All these craft come and go, ascend or descend, cross each other and avoid each other in orderly confusion, presenting the most marvellous spectacle which it is given to man to behold, especially when one is fortunate enough, as I was, to see it enlivened and gilded by the rays of the sun.

On the banks of the river, now drawing nearer, I could make out trees, houses crouching on the bank, one foot in the water and the hand extended to seize the merchandise as it passed; ship-yards with immense sheds and the ribs of vessels in course of construction, resembling the skeletons of cachalots, showing strange against the sky. A forest of colossal chimney shafts, in the form of towers, of columns, of pylons, of obelisks, gave the sky line an Egyptian look, a most extraordinary resemblance to the distant outline of Thebes, of Babylon, of an antediluvian city, of the capital of awful sins and of the revolts of pride. In-

dustry, on such a scale, attains almost to poetry, to a poetry with which nature has nothing to do, and which is the result of the mighty development of human will.

Above Gravesend, the lower limit of the port of London, warehouses, foundries, and ship-yards are crowded together more closely, draw nearer each other and are heaped one upon another in most picturesque irregularity. On the left swell the two domes of the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, through the colonnade of which is perceived a background of park with great trees most charming in effect. Seated on the benches in the peristyles, the pensioners watch the coming and going of the ships, of the remembrance of which they are full and which form the staple of their conversations, while the salt odour of the brine still delights their nostrils. Sir Christopher Wren was the architect of this fine building. Local passenger steamers start every fifteen minutes from Greenwich and London simultaneously. Greenwich is opposite the Isle of Dogs, or rather the Peninsula of Dogs, where the Thames turns back on its course and forms an elbow that has been cleverly turned to account. Here are the East India Company's docks. The

West India docks, very much less large and less frequented, are on the right, at the centre of the curve formed by the river and a little below it.

The East India docks are so enormous, gigantic, and fabulously large as to overpass human proportions. They are a work of Cyclops and Titans. Above the houses, warehouses, slopes, stairs, and innumerable hybrid buildings that obstruct the approaches to the river, rises a prodigious avenue of ships' masts prolonged indefinitely; an inextricable maze of rigging, spars, and ropes that would put to shame, as far as the density of interlacing goes, the most abundant creepers in an American virgin forest. This is where is built, caulked, and hauled up that innumerable fleet of vessels that sail in search of the riches of the world, and then pour them into that bottomless gulf of wretchedness and luxury called London. The East India docks can accommodate three hundred ships. A canal, called the City Canal, running parallel to the docks and which makes the peninsula into the Isle of Dogs, shortens by three or four miles the distance round the curve.

The Commercial docks, on the opposite shore, the London docks and the Saint Catherine's docks, below

the Tower, are no less wonderful. At the Commercial docks are the largest cellars in the world; it is there that are stored the wines of Spain and Portugal. And I have not included in this enumeration private docks and basins; every minute from out of a group of houses emerges the hull of a vessel; the yards poke into the windows, the gaffs penetrate into the rooms, and the dolphin-strikers seem to be smiting the warehouse doors like battering-rams of old. Houses and ships live on a footing of the most cordial and touching intimacy; when the tide is high, the courts and yards of the houses turn into basins and welcome vessels. Stairs, slopes, and basins of stone, of granite, of brick, ascend and descend from the river to the houses. A regular quay would spoil the familiarity of the river and the city; so picturesqueness is the gainer, for there is nothing so horrible as those everlasting straight lines, prolonged in spite of all, of which modern civilisation is so stupidly fond.

England is but one vast ship-yard; London is but a seaport. The sea is an Englishman's natural home; indeed these people enjoy it so much that many noblemen spend their lives sailing on perilous voyages in small vessels fitted out and commanded by themselves.

The Royal Yacht Squadron's sole purpose is to encourage this taste and afford opportunities for its development. The English dislike the land so much that they have installed a hospital in the very centre of the Thames, in a large ship, razeed, to which sailors falling sick while in London are taken. The opinion expressed by Tom Coffin, in Fenimore Cooper's novel, "The Pilot," namely, that the land is good only for the purpose of replenishing the stores and filling up with water, cannot strike the English as exaggerated.

The fronts of all these houses look out upon the river, for the Thames is the main street of London, the arterial vein whence diverge the branches that bear the life blood to the body of the city. Wonderful therefore is the wealth of signs and notices! The buildings are bedizened from attic to cellar with letters of every size and colour; the capitals often are a story in height, for they have to be readable across a sheet of water seven or eight times as wide as the Seine. The glance rests upon the acroter of a curiously traceried house, and you wonder to what order of architecture it belongs. So far as charlatanry in advertising goes, the English are unrivalled, and I advise our people to take a trip to London to convince

themselves of the fact that they are nowhere in comparison. The aspect of the houses thus adorned, placarded, streaked with inscriptions and posters, seen from the river, is quaint indeed.

I was greatly surprised to behold intact, externally at least, the Tower which on the faith of the accounts in the newspapers, I had believed burned to the ground and reduced to ashes. It has lost nothing of its ancient appearance. It still stands, with its high walls, its sinister look and its low archway, the Traitors' Gate, under which a black boat, gloomier than the bark of Charon, brought in the guilty and took away the condemned to death. The Tower is not, as its name would seem to indicate, a solitary donjon, an isolated belfry, but a regular Bastile, a cluster of towers connected by walls, a fortress surrounded by moats fed from the Thames, with guns and drawbridges; a mediæval fortress, at least as serious as our own Vincennes, and which contains a chapel, a menagerie, a Treasury, an arsenal, and many another curiosity.

We were nearing the end of our voyage; a few revolutions of the paddle-wheels and the steamer would range alongside the Custom House wharf, where our trunks would be examined on the following day only,

the Sunday being as scrupulously observed in London as the Jewish Sabbath in Jerusalem.

Never shall I forget the splendid prospect outspread before me. The gigantic arches of London Bridge spanned the river in five tremendous spans, and stood out black against the sunset sky. The disk of the sun, blazing like a shield made red hot in the furnace, was setting exactly behind the centre arch that cut upon its orb an incomparably bold and strong segment. A long stream of fire glittered and quivered upon the lipping waves; mist and smoke filled the space up to Southwark Bridge, the arches of which showed faintly through the haze. To the right and somewhat in the distance, shone the flames of gilded bronze that crown the giant pillar erected in memory of the Great Fire of 1666; on the left the steeple of Saint Olave's shot up above the roofs; monumental chimneys, that might well have been taken for votive columns were Ionic or Doric capitals accustomed to vomit forth smoke, broke the lines of the horizon in the happiest way, their vigorous tones bringing out still more strongly the orange and pale citron shades of the heavens.

On turning round I saw a perfect City on the Waters, with its quarters and its streets formed of

ships, for it is at this bridge, the lowest down the river, that ships stop; up to that point the communication between the two banks is kept up by boats. The tunnel, between Rotherhithe and Wapping, will do away with this inconvenience when it is completed, that is in two or three months' time. The great difficulty was to construct slopes that would enable vehicles to descend so low. It had been overcome by a series of circular ways with a gradient of only four feet in one hundred. As it was not possible to build a bridge under which vessels could pass, it was determined to put the bridge under the ships and the river. This bold idea was conceived in the brain of a Frenchman, Brunel. The two galleries forming the tunnel are entirely round, that being the form which presents the greatest resistance. The lower portion of the circle has been filled up to a level for the passage of vehicles; the lateral walls are concave. The centre wall is pierced by small arches which allow pedestrians to pass from one part of the tunnel to the other. The length of the tunnel is thirteen hundred feet, and the upper portion of the archway is fifteen feet below the bed of the river.

We landed. As I did not know a word of English,

I wondered somewhat how I should find the person to whom I was recommended. I had written very carefully on a card the name of the street and the number of the house, and showed it to a cabman who, fortunately, could read, and off he went at lightning speed. The jokes about the slowness of cab horses, very appropriate in Paris, would be entirely out of place here, where hackney carriages drive as fast as the best horses of our private carriages. The cab in which I was seated, and which nearly corresponded to our own citadines, was of the shape most fashionable in Paris at the present time: very low wheels, the door straight and square like the leaf of a cupboard door, and the general appearance of a Sedan chair on casters. This style of carriage, which is the very acme of elegance with us, is confined, in London, to hackney coaches. The interior is upholstered in plain American cloth. The driver tips a penny to the poor devil who opens the door, which is not the case in France, where it is the passenger who pays the groom. The fare is at the rate of a shilling a mile, and increases in proportion to the distance traversed. To be done with cabs, let me add that the most peculiar I have seen are a sort of very low cabriolet, on which the driver does not sit

by the side of the passenger, as in our tax-cabs, nor in front, as on our four-wheelers, but behind, where the footman usually sits; the reins pass over the hood and the man drives from over your head. These minor details will no doubt strike lovers of æsthetic discussions, sworn admirers of monuments and valuators of antiquities as being very insignificant, yet it is precisely these facts that make one people different from another and enable you to realise that you are in London and not in Paris.

While my cab was rapidly traversing the streets that separate the Custom House from High Holborn, I kept looking out of the windows and marvelling at the amazing silence and solitude of the quarters through which I was passing. The place looked like a dead city, like one of those cities peopled with petrified inhabitants of which Eastern tales tell. Every shop was closed and not a single human face showed at any window. Scarcely did a stray passer-by sneak past like a shadow. This gloomy and deserted aspect formed such a contrast with the bustling, busy London I had imagined, that I could not recover from my surprise. At last I recollected that it was Sunday and that I had been told that London Sundays were the very ideal of

ennui. That day, which is with us, at least so far as the popular element is concerned, a day of joy, of walks abroad, of dress, of feasting and dancing, is, on the other side of the Channel, a day of deepest gloom. The taverns close at midnight on the Saturday, the theatres give no performances, the shops are hermetically closed, and the man who has not taken care to get in his supplies on the previous evening would find it very difficult to get anything to eat; life seems to be suspended, and the wheels of London cease revolving, like those of a clock when the pendulum is stopped. For fear of profaning the dominical solemnity, London dare not budge and scarcely ventures to breathe even. On that day, after having heard a sermon by the preacher of the sect to which he belongs, every good Englishman shuts himself up within his house to meditate over the Bible, to offer up to God his feeling of boredom, and to enjoy, in front of a blazing fire the happiness of being neither a Frenchman nor a Papist, which is to him a source of unending bliss. At midnight the spell is broken, life, suspended for a time, is felt again, the houses reopen, the blood courses anew through the veins of the mighty frame that had fallen into a lethargy.

The next day, pretty early, I started through the city, quite alone, as is my wont in a foreign country; for above all I hate having a guide who compels me to look at everything I do not want to see and makes me pass by everything that interests me. I carefully avoid monuments and what are called *the beauties* of a place. Monuments are usually composed of pillars, pediments, attics and other architectural parts which engravings and drawings reproduce with the utmost fidelity. I may say that I know every monument in Europe as well as if I had seen it, and indeed very much better. I know the churches and palaces of Venice, which I have never yet visited, by heart, and I have even written so accurate a description of that city that people refuse to believe I have never set foot in it. The "beauties" of a city consist of over wide streets and squares, bordered with new and uniform houses. At least that is always what one is shown on such occasions.

The first thing that struck me here was the immense width of the streets, lined with pavements broad enough for a score of people to walk abreast on. The low height of the houses makes the great breadth of the streets the more noticeable; our Rue de la Paix would

be almost a lane here. Wooden pavement for the streets which has been tried but on a few yards with us, is generally adopted in London, where it stands admirably a traffic thrice as large and as busy as that of Paris. The wheels run on that pine flooring quietly and smoothly, as on a carpet, and the inhabitants are spared the deafening rattling of carriages on granite paving. It should be added, however, that in London the width of the pavements enables pedestrians to give up the roadway to horses and vehicles, thus preventing the numerous accidents to which the absence of noise would otherwise give rise. Such streets as are not paved with wood are macadamised.

So here I was, following streets at hap-hazard, and walking deliberately on like a man sure of his road. The shops were only just beginning to open. Paris rises earlier than London, which does not awake much before ten in the morning. On the other hand it goes to bed much later. Servants in bonnets, for women never leave off their bonnets, were washing and scouring the door-steps.

As the inhabitants are not yet up, let us take a look at the houses, and describe the nest before describing the birds. English houses have no carriage gateways;

very few have courtyards; they are separated from the pavement by a basement covered with bars or protected by a railing. At the bottom of this trench are placed the kitchens, pantries and other offices. Coal, bread, meat — carried in hollowed boards — in a word all the provisions are taken down that way without interfering with the comfort of the family. The stables are usually placed in separate buildings, not infrequently at quite a distance. Brick is the material generally employed in these buildings. English bricks are often of a yellowish ochre colour, false in tone, which, in my opinion, is not equal to the warm red tones of our bricks. Houses thus constructed have a sickly and unhealthy look most unpleasant to the eye. They are mainly of three stories, with two or three windows on the front, each dwelling being, as a general rule, inhabited by a single family. The window sashes are of the kind we call "guillotine." White stone steps, like a drawbridge spanning the trench in which are the kitchens and offices, connect the house and the street, and the door, painted in imitation oak, is generally adorned with a brass plate bearing the name and title of the owner. These are the characteristic features of a regular English house.

Besides the width of the streets and pavements and the low height of the houses, there is another thing which lends London a peculiar aspect; it is the black colour that uniformly covers everything. It is most gloomy and depressing, for it is not the dark, rich, weather-worn appearance that time adds to old buildings in more Southern countries, but an impalpable, subtile dust that clings to whatever it touches, that penetrates everywhere, and from which there is no escape. The enormous quantity of soft coal burned in London for the heating of houses and in manufactories, is one of the chief causes of the general mourning livery worn by buildings, some of the older of which look as though they had been painted over with blacking. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the statues; those of the Duke of Bedford, of the Duke of York on top of his column, and that of George III on horseback, resemble negroes or chimney-sweeps, so incrusted are they and so disfigured by that funeral quintessence of coal dust that falls from the London sky. Newgate prison, with its boss-work and its vermiculated stones, the old church of Saint Saviour's and a few Gothic chapels, the names of which have escaped my memory, appear to have been

built of black granite rather than to be darkened by time. Nowhere else have I seen that opaque, gloomy tint which lends to buildings, half veiled in mist, the air of great catafalques, and which would suffice to explain the traditional spleen of the English. As I looked upon these walls coloured by soot, I thought of the Alcazar and the Cathedral of Toledo, which the sun has clothed with a robe of purple and saffron.

The dome of Saint Paul's, a heavy imitation of Saint Peter's at Rome, and a building of the same genus as the Pantheon and the Escorial, with its hump-backed cupola and its two square belfries, suffers cruelly from the influence of the London atmosphere. In spite of all the efforts made to keep it white, it is always black, at least on one side. In vain is paint lavished upon it, the imperceptible coal dust sifted by the fog gets ahead of the house-painter's brush. St. Paul's is a further proof of the fact that the dome form belongs to the East, while the Northern heavens require to be cut up by the spires and high pitched gables of Gothic architecture.

The London sky, even when free from clouds, is of a milky blue in which whitishness prevails. It is of a markedly paler blue than the sky in France, and the

mornings and evenings are always bathed in mists and veiled in vapours. In the sunshine, London smokes like a heated horse or a steaming caldron, producing those wonderful effects of light in open spaces that English water-colour painters and engravers have so admirably rendered. Often, even in fine weather, it is difficult to see Southwark Bridge clearly from London Bridge, although they are quite close to each other. The smoke, spreading everywhere, softens harsh angles, conceals the poverty of the buildings, increases the perspective and imparts a peculiar mystery and distance to the most positive of objects. Thanks to it, the chimney shaft of a factory is easily turned into an obelisk, a wretched warehouse assumes the air of a Babylonian terrace, and a dull row of pillars is changed into a Palmyra portico. The symmetrical dulness of civilisation and the vulgarity of the forms it employs soften or disappear under that kindly veil.

Wine dealers, so common in Paris, are replaced in London by distillers of gin and other strong liquors. The gin palaces are very fine, they are adorned with brass work and gilding and painfully contrast by their splendour with the wretchedness of the class that frequents them. The doors are worn breast high by the

horny hands that are constantly pushing open their leaves. I saw entering one of these places a poor old woman who has remained in my memory like the remembrance of a nightmare.

I have closely studied Spanish wretchedness, and I have often been accosted by the witches that posed for Goya's "Caprices." I have stepped over, at night, the beggars that slept on the steps of the Granada theatre; I have given alms to Riberas and Murillos out of their frames, who were wrapped up in rags which, where they were not in holes, were stains; I have wandered through the dens of the Albaycin and followed the Monte Sagrado road, where the gypsies hollow out retreats for themselves in the rock and under the roots of the cacti and the fig-trees; but never have I seen anything more gloomy, more sad, more heart-sickening than that old woman entering the gin palace.

She wore a bonnet, the poor wretch, but what a bonnet! Never did trained donkey wear one more lamentable, more worn, more rumpled, more ragged, more bashed in, more piteously grotesque. The original colour of it had long become unrecognisable; I could not tell you whether it had been white or black, yellow or violet. To see her you would have thought she

was wearing a scoop or a coal shovel. On her poor old body hung rags that I can compare to nothing so well as to the lamentable torn vestments hung up above the bodies of the drowned that are exposed at the Morgue, but, sadder than in these cases, in this one the body was living and upright instead of being laid out. How different were these awful rags from the good Spanish rags, tawny, golden and picturesque that may be reproduced by a great painter and which are the glory of a school and of a literature. Between the English wretchedness, cold and icy as winter rain, and the careless, poetical Spanish poverty that, if it lack a cloak, wraps itself up in a sunbeam, and that, if it lack bread, puts out its hand and picks up an orange or a handful of those delicious sweet acorns that Sancho Panza delighted in!

A minute later the old woman came out of the gin shop, walking with her shoulders back like a soldier's; her earthy face had brightened up, a feverish red coloured her cheek bones, and a smile of idiotic happiness fluttered upon her faded lips. As she passed by me, she lifted up her eyes and cast on me a look that was dark, deep, fixed and yet devoid of thought. No doubt that is how the dead look when by chance some impious

hand draws back their eyelids that are never again to open save to behold God. Then her pupils became dim and the glance flickered out like a coal dipped in water. The strong gin was beginning to work, and she went on her way wagging her head with a stupid laugh. Blessed be thou, O gin, in spite of the declamations of philanthropists and temperance societies, for the moment of joy and repose thou bringest to the wretched. For such woes any remedy is legitimate, nor is the people mistaken in this. See how it hastens to drink the waters of Lethe under the name of gin. Strange art thou, O humanity, that insistest on the poor always preserving their reason in order that they may cease feeling the extent of their misery! You would do well, ye Englishmen, to send to Ireland the cargoes of opium with which you seek to poison the Chinese.

A little farther on I beheld a similar and no less depressing sight; an old white headed man, already drunk, was mouthing out some foolish song as he gestured wildly; his hat had fallen to the ground, but he was unable to pick it up, and he leaned to the best of his ability against a wall three or four feet high, topped with an iron railing.

The wall was that of a graveyard, for in London they still keep up cemeteries in the city. A church of the most lugubrious aspect and smoky like the chimney of a forge, rose amid blackened tombs, some of which had that vague human shape like that of bandaged and boxed mummies. The drunken old man singing within a couple of yards of these tombs presented a contrast most painful in its dissonance. Yet these two samples of the wretchedness of London were as nothing to what I was to behold later in Saint Giles', the Irish quarter, though they impressed me more deeply, the old man and the old woman being the first two living beings I came upon. It is true that the homeless rise early.

Meanwhile the streets were beginning to wake up; workmen, their white aprons tucked in their belts, were on their way to their work; the butchers' boys were carrying round the meat in wooden boards; the carriages went by at a lightning pace; the busses, brilliantly painted and varnished, and covered with gilded signs indicating their route, followed each other almost uninterruptedly, with the passengers sitting on top and the conductors standing on a board by the door; these busses travel at a good pace, for London is so

huge, so immense, that the need of speed is much more felt than in Paris. The activity of the locomotion contrasts strangely with the impassible air and the cold, phlegmatic physiognomy, to put it mildly, of the imperturbable pedestrians. The English walk fast, like the dead in the ballad, and yet their faces betray no desire to reach their destination. They run, yet do not seem to be in a hurry; they go straight ahead like a cannon ball, never turning if one knocks up against them, never apologising if they elbow anybody; the women themselves walk at a fast pace that would do honour to a storming party of grenadiers; their pace is the geometric virile gait which makes an Englishwoman recognisable all over the continent and which excites the laughter of the daintily stepping Parisian woman. Even the children go to school at a lively pace; idlers are unknown in London, although the *badaud* reappears as a cockney.

London extends over an immense extent of ground; the houses are not very high, the streets are very wide, the squares numerous and spacious. Saint James' Park, Hyde Park, Regent's Park cover vast spaces, so one must hasten else one would never reach one's destination before the next day.

The Thames is to London what the Boulevard is to Paris, the main line of traffic. Only on the Thames, steamers take the place of omnibuses. These steamers are long, narrow, and of shallow draft, much like the "Dorades" that used to ply between the Pont-Royal and Saint-Cloud. The trip costs sixpence, and one may go for that fare to Greenwich and Chelsea. There are stopping places near the bridges for the landing and embarking of passengers. Pleasant indeed are these short ten or fifteen minute trips, during which the picturesque banks of the river are unrolled before you as in a panorama. One can pass in this way under every bridge in London, and admire the three iron arches of Southwark Bridge, with their bold, wide span; the Ionic pillars which make Blackfriars' Bridge look so elegant; the Doric pillars, so robust and solid, of Waterloo Bridge, undoubtedly the handsomest in the world. As you descend below Waterloo Bridge you get a glimpse through the arches of Blackfriars' Bridge, of the gigantic mass of Saint Paul's, rising above an ocean of roofs, between the steeples of Saint Mary-le-Bone, Saint Benedict's and Saint Matthew's, with a part of the quay crowded with boats, ships, and stores. From

Westminster Bridge is seen the ancient abbey, whose two huge square towers, recalling those of Notre-Dame in Paris, and which have at each corner a pointed belfry, rise through the mist; the three quaintly traceried steeples of St. John the Evangelist's, to say nothing of the dentelations formed by the spires of distant churches, the great chimney stalks and the roofs of the houses. Vauxhall Bridge, the farthest up on this side, fitly closes the perspective. All these bridges, constructed of Portland stone or of Cornwall granite, have been built by private companies, for in London the Government does not interfere in any such matters, and the cost of construction is met by tolls. These tolls are collected, so far as pedestrians are concerned, in a really ingenious manner, each person passing through a turnstile and causing a wheel placed in the collecting office, to revolve one cog at a time. In that way the number of persons who have passed through the day is noted with certainty, and fraud on the part of the employees is rendered impossible.

You must forgive me if I keep on talking about the Thames, but the moving panorama it offers is so constantly new and grand that it is hard to get away from it. A forest of three-masters in the heart of a great

city is the finest spectacle the industry of man can offer to the eyes.

We shall, if you please, reach at once the heart of the rich quarters, pass from Waterloo Bridge, by Wellington Street, to the Strand, up the whole length of which we shall proceed. Starting from the pretty little church of Saint Mary's, so quaintly placed in the centre of the street, the Strand, which is enormously wide, is lined on either side with magnificent, sumptuous shops that, if they lack the dainty elegance of those of Paris, have an air of richness and luxurious abundance. Here are the show-windows of the print-sellers, in which one may admire the masterpieces of English engraving, so easy, so soft, so full of colour, and unfortunately applied to the worst drawings in the world, for, if English engravers are superior to the French in the mastery of their art, the French surpass them in perfection of drawing.

Queen Victoria's portrait is exhibited in every possible form in every shop-window; sometimes she wears her royal robes, her diamond crown and her regal mantle; sometimes she is simply dressed as a private lady, either alone or accompanied by Prince Albert; in one engraving they are represented side by side in a

tilbury, smiling away at each other in the most conjugal fashion. I think I am not guilty of exaggeration when I say that Queen Victoria's portrait is as common in England as Napoleon's in France. The young prince is also often represented, and in the toy shops are sold wax-peaches, called Windsor fruit, which, on being opened, show a baby, abundantly rouged and wrapped up in swaddling clothes, that claims to represent the Prince of Wales. I am bound to add that while the majority of portraits are improved, embellished, flattered, and lovingly caressed by a courtier engraver, there is no lack either of coarse drawings, worked off with the characteristic dash of English caricaturists, who treat Her Majesty in the most cavalier fashion.

Speaking of children's toys, I noticed how much more serious English toys are than ours. There were few drums, few trumpets, scarcely any Punches and soldiers, but, on the other hand, no end of steamships, sailing vessels, and railways with miniature engines and carriages, while the lantern slides, instead of representing the comical misadventures of Jocrisse or some such subject, formed a complete course of astronomy, a complete planetary system. There are also boxes

of architectural blocks, with which all manner of buildings may be constructed, and numerous other geometrical and physical pastimes that would not greatly delight Parisian children.

This talk of shops reminds me of a bit of advertising which our Paris charlatans will regret not having thought of. It is a question of mackintoshes, of waterproofs. In order to demonstrate triumphantly the waterproofing of his stuffs, the dealer has had the brilliant idea of nailing a part of one of his mackintoshes on a frame, so as to form a sort of basin. Into this he has poured about as much water as would hold in a basin, and in it dart and swim a dozen gold-fish. To turn an overcoat into a fishpond and to enable lovers of the gentle craft to fish in the skirt of their waterproof, is assuredly the very acme of advertising, the highest effort of charlatanism.

Proceeding towards Charing Cross, you see, at the corner of Trafalgar Square, the façade of Northumberland House, easily known by a great lion whose tail sticking straight out is of mediocre effect, artistically speaking, although it is unquestionably novel. It is the lion of the Percys, and never did heraldic lion take such advantage of the right to assume a fabulous form.

The marble staircase leading to the apartments is highly admired, as well as the collection of pictures, which consists, like all picture galleries, of paintings by Raphael, Titian, Paolo Veronese, Rubens, Albrecht Dürer, Van Dyck, besides Domenico Feti, Francia, Tempesta, Salvator Rosa, &c. I do not wish to cast doubts upon the gallery of the Duke of Northumberland, not having seen it, but I think that one cannot place much reliance upon the genuineness of the paintings by old masters which are to be found in England. Although most of them have been purchased for very large sums, they are in general nothing more than copies. The number of Murillos I saw being manufactured for the English market in Seville makes me suspect the Raphaels they own; their Van Dycks and Holbeins are far more authentic; they are portraits of lords or ladies and of high personages, painted on the spot, that have remained in the families as heirlooms, and the history of which is perfectly well known. What I say need trouble no one; those who fancy they possess a Raphael or a Titian, and who in reality have nothing more than seven or eight layers of oil colours in a handsome frame, need not be any the less happy; faith saves.

A monument to the memory of Nelson is being erected in the centre of Trafalgar Square, and until it is finished the hoarding around the space for the monument is covered with huge posters and monster bills, the letters of which are six feet high and of the most extraordinary shapes. This is the spot for the advertising of phenomena, unusual shows and dramatic performances.

Really the English overdo Waterloo and Trafalgar. I know very well that we ourselves are not free from the mania of adorning our streets and bridges with the names of our victories, but our repertory is at least a little more varied.

Regent Street, which is arcaded like the Rue de Rivoli, Piccadilly, Pall Mall, the Haymarket and the Opera, which may best be compared to the Odéon in Paris, Carlton Place and Saint James' Park, and the Queen's Palace, with its triumphal arch in imitation of that of the Carroussel, make this part of London one of the most splendid of the city.

The architecture of the houses, or rather of the palaces which form this quarter, inhabited by the wealthy, is quite grandiose and monumental, although the composition is hybrid and often equivocal. Never,

even in a city of antiquity, were so many pillars and pediments seen together. The Greeks and the Romans were assuredly not as Greek and Roman as Her Majesty's subjects. One walks between two rows of Parthenons, which is very flattering; there are nothing but temples of Vesta and Jupiter to be seen and the illusion would be complete did not one read in the spaces between the pillars inscriptions such as the following: *Gas Company*. *Life Insurance Company*. The Ionic order is well thought of; the Doric even more so, but the Paestumian pillar enjoys a marvellous popularity; it is stuck everywhere, like the nutmeg Boileau speaks of. At first glance these colonnades and pediments have quite a splendid aspect, but all this magnificence is for the most part of mastic or Roman cement, stone being rare in London. It is particularly in the newly built churches that English architectural genius has exhibited the quaintest cosmopolitanism and most strangely confused the various styles. Upon an Egyptian pylon rises a Greek order mixed with Roman arches, and over all is placed a Gothic spire. The meanest Italian peasant would shrug his shoulders with pity at the sight. Yet all modern buildings, with very few exceptions, are in this style.

The English are rich, active, industrious; they know how to forge iron, to master steam, to twist matter into every shape, to invent machines of terrific power: they may even have great poets; but they will always lack art, properly speaking; form in itself escapes them. They feel this, they are annoyed at it, their national self-love is hurt by it. They know that at bottom and in spite of their marvellous material civilisation, they are nothing but barbarians veneered over. Lord Elgin, so violently anathematised by Byron, committed a useless piece of sacrilege; the *bassi-relievi* he brought to London will inspire no one. The gift of plastics has been denied to the peoples of the North; the sun, that brings objects out in relief, strengthens contours and restores to each thing its true form, illumines these countries with too oblique rays which the leaden light of gas cannot make up for. Then the English are not Roman Catholics. Protestantism is a religion as fatal to art as Islamism, and perhaps even more so. Artists must be either Roman Catholics or pagans. In a country where temples are nothing but great square rooms, devoid of pictures, ornaments, and statues, where periwigged gentlemen speak seriously, and with a wealth of Biblical allusions

of Papistical idols and the Scarlet Woman of Babylon, art can never rise very high, for the noblest aim of sculptor and painter alike is to fix in marble or on canvas the divine symbols of the religion prevailing in his country and in his day. Phidias carved Venus, Raphael painted the Madonna, but neither of them was an Anglican. London may become a new Rome, but assuredly it will never be a new Athens, a position that seems to be reserved for Paris. In London, there is gold, power, material development carried to the highest degree, a gigantic exaggeration of whatever may be done with money, patience and will; there is the useful and the comfortable, but neither beauty nor the agreeable. In Paris, we have grace, flexibility, delicacy, an easy understanding of harmony and beauty, in a word, Greek qualities. The English will excel in everything which it is possible to do and particularly in what is impossible. They will establish a Bible Society in Pekin, and will get to Timbuctoo in white kid gloves and patent leather boots, in a state of complete "respectability." They will invent machines capable of turning out six hundred thousand pairs of stockings in one minute, and they will even discover new countries in which they may dispose of their

stockings, but they will never make a bonnet that a Parisian shop-girl would consent to wear. If taste could be bought, they would pay a high price for it; fortunately God has reserved to himself two or three little things which all the gold of the great of the earth cannot buy — genius, beauty, and happiness.

Nevertheless, in spite of these criticisms, which apply to details, the general aspect of London has something about it that amazes and fills one with stupor. It is in very truth a capital in the civilised meaning. Everything is grand, splendid, and arranged according to the latest improvements. The streets are too wide, too great, too well lighted; the care for material facilities is carried to the utmost point. In this respect Paris is at least a hundred years behind London, and up to a certain point its mode of construction prevents its ever equalling the English capital. English houses are very lightly built, for the ground on which they are constructed does not belong to the owner of the building. The whole of the ground on which the city stands is owned, as in the Middle Ages, by a very small number of noblemen and millionaires who grant permission to build in return for a stated payment. This permission covers a certain period of

time, and the house is built to last about as long. This reason, joined to the fragility of the materials employed, is the cause that London is renewed every thirty years and allows of the progress of civilisation, as the cant phrase goes, to be kept up with. Then the Great Fire of 1666 made a clean sweep, much to my regret, for I am not very fond of modern architectural genius and I greatly prefer the picturesque to the comfortable.

The English genius is naturally methodical; in the streets every one keeps to the right as a matter of course; there are thus formed regular streams of people going the one in one direction the other in the other. A handful of soldiers is enough for London, and even they have no police duties to perform. I do not remember seeing a single guard-room. Policemen, with a number on their hats and a strap on their cuff to show they are on duty, walk about quietly and philosophically, bearing no other arms than a baton less than twenty-four inches in length, and thus traverse the most densely populated quarters. In case of need they call each other by means of a wooden rattle. The vast traffic, the terrifying movement that gives one the vertigo, is so to speak, left to itself, and thanks

to the common sense of the crowd, accidents do not happen.

The people look more wretched than the lower classes in Paris. With us, working men, and people of the lower classes have clothes made for them; they are coarse, it is true, but of a particular cut, so that it is plain they have always owned them. If their jacket happens to be torn, one understands that they have worn it since it was new. The shop girls and working girls are fresh and clean, though very simply dressed. But it is not so in London; there every one wears a dress coat, trousers with straps, *qui facit ille facit*, — even the poor devil who opens the door of a cab. The women all wear a *lady's* bonnet and gown so that at the first glance they look like people of a higher walk in life who have come to grief through misconduct or misfortune. The reason of this is that the lower classes in London wear second-hand clothes, and by a series of successive degradations, the gentleman's dress coat finally adorns the person of a sewer cleaner, and the duchess' satin bonnet is stuck on some wretched servant's head. Even in Saint Giles', that dreadful Irish quarter which surpasses anything one can imagine in the way of dirt and filth, are seen silk

hats and black coats, the latter usually worn without a shirt and buttoned over the bare buff that shows through the tears. Yet Saint Giles is but two steps from Oxford street and Piccadilly.

Nor are those contrasts diminished by the least gradation; there is no transition between the most splendid luxury and the most appalling poverty. Carriages do not enter these rutty lanes, full of puddles of water in which swarm ragged children and where tall slips of girls with dishevelled hair, bare footed and bare legged, with a wretched rag scarce sufficient to cross on the bosom, look at you with a haggard, fierce glance. What suffering and famine are to be read on those thin, sallow, gray, bumpy faces reddened by the cold! There are poor devils there who have been hungry from the day they were weaned. These people live on steamed potatoes and rarely know the taste of bread. By dint of privation the blood of these miserable wretches becomes thinner and thinner, and from red turns yellow, as has been proved by the reports of medical men.

There are on the lodging-houses in Saint Giles' inscriptions that run thus — *Furnished cellar for a single gentleman.* That is enough to give you an idea of the

place. I was curious enough to enter one of these cellars, and I assure you I never saw any place so little furnished. It seems incredible that human beings can live in such dens, yet it is true that they die there in thousands.

That is the seamy side of every civilisation; monstrous fortunes mean frightful poverty. In order that a few may devour so much, many more must go fasting; the loftier the palace, the deeper the quarry, and nowhere is the disproportion more marked than in England. To be poor in London strikes me as one of the tortures Dante forgot to include in his spiral of woes. It is so plain that the possession of wealth is the only recognised merit, that the poor English despise themselves and humbly put up with the arrogance and contempt of those in easy or rich circumstances. The English, who talk so much of Papistic idols, ought not to forget that the golden calf is the vilest of idols and the one that calls for the most sacrifices.

Happily the fetidity of these loathsome places is corrected by the squares, which are very numerous. The Place Royale in Paris best conveys the idea of an English square, which is a place bordered by houses of uniform design, and having in the centre a garden

planted with tall trees, enclosed by railings; the emerald green sward of these spaces pleasantly rests the eyes wearied by the sombre tints of the sky and the buildings. These squares are often connected and cover a vast extent of ground. Magnificent ones have just been erected near Hyde Park, and are intended for the nobility. No shop, no store troubles the aristocratic peace of these elegant Thebaids. It is greatly to be wished that the use of squares should become general in Paris, where the houses tend to crowd more and more together, and from which vegetation and verdure will end by disappearing completely. There is nothing so pleasant as these vast, quiet, cool and green enclosures. It is true that I never saw any one walking about in these attractive gardens, to which each tenant has a key; they are satisfied with preventing other people from entering them.

The squares and the parks are one of the great charms of London. Saint James' Park, close to Pall Mall is a delightful place to stroll in. It is reached by a huge staircase, worthy of Babylon itself, at the foot of the Duke of York's column. The walk along the Egyptian colonnade of Carlton Place is very wide and very handsome. But what I especially liked about it,

is the great pond filled with herons, ducks and other water-birds. The English excel in giving to made gardens a romantic and natural look. Westminster, the towers of which rise above the tree tops, admirably closes the prospect on the river side.

Hyde Park, where parade the fashionable horses and equipages, has something quite rural and country like, thanks to the extent of the waters and of the greens. It is not a garden but a landscape. The statue voted by the ladies of London to the Duke of Wellington, is in Hyde Park. The noble Duke has been idealised and deified under the figure of Achilles. I do not believe it is possible to carry grotesqueness and ridiculousness farther; to place upon the torso of the valiant son of Peleus and the muscular neck of the conqueror of Hector the noble Duke's British head, with its hooked nose, its flat mouth and its square chin, is one of the most comical ideas that ever entered a human brain. It is artless, involuntary and therefore irresistible caricature. The statue, cast in bronze by Westmacott, out of the metal of the guns taken at the battles of Vitoria, Salamanca, Tolosa and Waterloo, is no less than eighteen feet high. The corrective to this apotheosis is to be found alongside of it. Thanks

to one of those ironical antitheses due to chance, the great jester at human affairs, the noble Duke's mansion, Apsley House, stands on the corner of Piccadilly, and from his window he can look every morning upon the bronze counterfeit presentment of himself as Achilles, which is a very pleasant sort of an awakening. Unfortunately Lord Wellington's popularity in England is somewhat doubtful, and as the rabble knows no keener delight than to smash with stones, and sometimes with gunshots, the windows of Achilles, all the sashes in Apsley House are grated and protected by iron lined shutters. It is the gemoniae by the side of the Pantheon; the Tarpeian Rock close by the Capitol.

Hyde Park is lined with charming houses in the real English style, adorned with glazed galleries, green shutters, and projecting pavilions that recall Gothic turrets and produce an excellent effect.

One is surprised to see such vast open spaces in a city like London. Regent's Park, in which are the Zoölogical Gardens and which is bordered by buildings in the style of the Garde-Meuble and the Ministry of Marine in Paris, is absolutely enormous, and one can easily lose one's way in it. The most picturesque

effects have been obtained, thanks to the skilful handling of the undulation of the ground.

That is about what I saw on my walk through London; it is of course very incomplete, but I should need volumes and not a single letter, did I attempt to describe London fully. You may desire to know, however, my opinion of English cookery and to be told what the English eat and drink, these matters being usually passed over in silence by writers of travel who are taken up with quarrelling over the exact measurements of some pillar or obelisk that no one cares a pin for. For my part, as I do not belong to that exalted class, I shall confess that the question is a serious one, — as serious as the Eastern question. The English claim that they possess the secret of healthy, substantial, and abundant food. That food consists mainly of turtle soup, beefsteak, rumpsteak, fish, vegetables boiled in water, ham, beef, rhubarb tarts, and other similar primitive dishes. It is quite true that all this food is absolutely natural and is cooked without any sauce or relish, but it is not eaten in the condition in which it is served. The seasoning of the dishes is done at table, according to each person's taste. Six or eight small flagons placed on the table on a silver

salver, and containing anchovy sauce, cayenne pepper, Harvey's fish sauce, and a number of East Indian ingredients that blister the throat, turn these dishes so simply dressed into something more violent than the spiciest of ragouts. I have eaten without a wink fried pimento and preserved ginger, but these things were as honey and sugar by the side of English dishes. Porter and Scotch ale, which I am very fond of, are quite unlike our French beers, and unlike the Belgian beers too, which are themselves superior to our own. Porter will burn like brandy, and Scotch ale intoxicates like champagne. The wines drunk in England, sherry and port, are merely rum more or less disguised. Under the name of champagne there is also drunk a large quantity of Devonshire cider. At dessert there is put on, along with the Cheshire cheese and the dry biscuits, celery very neatly served in crystal cups. The oranges, which are brought from Portugal, are excellent and very cheap. Indeed they are the only cheap thing in London.

I dined at the Hotel Brunswick, near the East India docks, and close to the Thames. The ships passed up and down in front of the windows and almost seemed to be coming into the room. I was served,

among other things, with a rumpsteak of such size, surrounded by so many potatoes and so much cauliflower, and covered with such abundance of oyster sauce, that there would have been enough to satisfy four people. I was also taken to a table d'hôte in a tavern near the Fish Market at Billingsgate, where I ate exquisitely fresh turbot, soles, and salmon. At the beginning of the meal the landlord asked the blessing, and at the close returned thanks after having knocked on the table with his knife to call the company to attention.

The cafés, or coffee-rooms, are utterly unlike French cafés, and are rather gloomy rooms, divided into small boxes; they altogether lack the brightness of our Parisian cafés, brilliant with gilding, mouldings, and mirrors. Indeed, mirrors are not often met with in England, and those I saw were very small.

There are also in every part of the city fish-houses where people go to eat oysters, prawns, and lobsters at night after the theatre. As these taverns are not licensed for the sale of beer and spirits, you have to give the money to the waiter, who goes out, as required, to purchase the drink you wish.

As for the theatres, I saw only the Italian Opera and the Théâtre-Français. It would be absurd to talk

to you of the latter, and so I shall say a few words of the former.

The hall is quite as large as that of our own Opera in the Rue Lepelletier, but in order to accommodate the spectators the stage has been made to suffer. The spectators invade the stage, there being three rows of proscenium boxes between the footlights and the curtain, producing a curious effect. The supernumeraries, the members of the chorus, may not come farther forward than the first wings, in order not to prevent the young gentlemen in the lower proscenium boxes from seeing the stage. The leading singers alone stand out on the proscenium and play outside the framework of the stage setting, much as if they were figures cut out of a picture and placed some six feet in front of the background against which they are to show. When at the end of an act, in consequence of some tragical event, the hero or the heroine is stabbed and dies near the footlights, he or she has to be taken under the arms and dragged backwards up the stage, so as not to be separated from the mourning suite by the fall of the curtain.

The boxes are upholstered in red damask, and are consequently somewhat dark. The hall itself is not

very well lighted, the whole blaze of light being reserved for the stage; this arrangement, combined with the powerful foot, top, and side lights, enable absolutely magical effects to be produced. The sunrise which ends the ballet of "Giselle" produces a perfect illusion and does honour to Mr. Greave's skill. Along with "Giselle" was given an opera by Donizetti, "Gemma de Vergy," imitated, as far as the libretto goes, from Dumas' "Charles VII and his Great Vassals," and as regards the music, from Donizetti himself, and also Bellini and Rossini. Gualti, the tenor, and Mlle. Adelaide Moltini, of Milan, managed to win applause in it, but the lady's shoulders accounted for quite half the demonstration.

Although the swells had not yet arrived, I saw at the Opera lovely female faces, beautifully set off by the red damask of the boxes. Keepsakes are truer than one is apt to think them, and they do reproduce very faithfully the mannered grace and the frail, elegant forms of the women of the aristocracy. These do have eyes with long lashes and moist glances, curls of golden hair that caress white shoulders and snowy bosoms generously exposed to the view, — a fashion which strikes me as contrasting rather strongly with Eng-

lish prudery. Bright colours appear to be preferred. In the same box there were shining, like the solar spectrum, three ladies dressed, the one in yellow, the second in scarlet, and the third in sky-blue. Nor are the head-dresses in very good taste. Every one knows how many things Englishwomen stick on their heads: gold fringes, coral branches, twigs of trees, shells, oyster beds; their fancy is startled at nothing, especially when they have reached "a certain age," as it is called.

And now that is about all that may be seen while traversing London as goes his nose, a worthy dreamer who does not know a word of English, who is no great admirer of blackened stones, and who thinks any street that happens to open up before him as attractive as the Great Exhibition.